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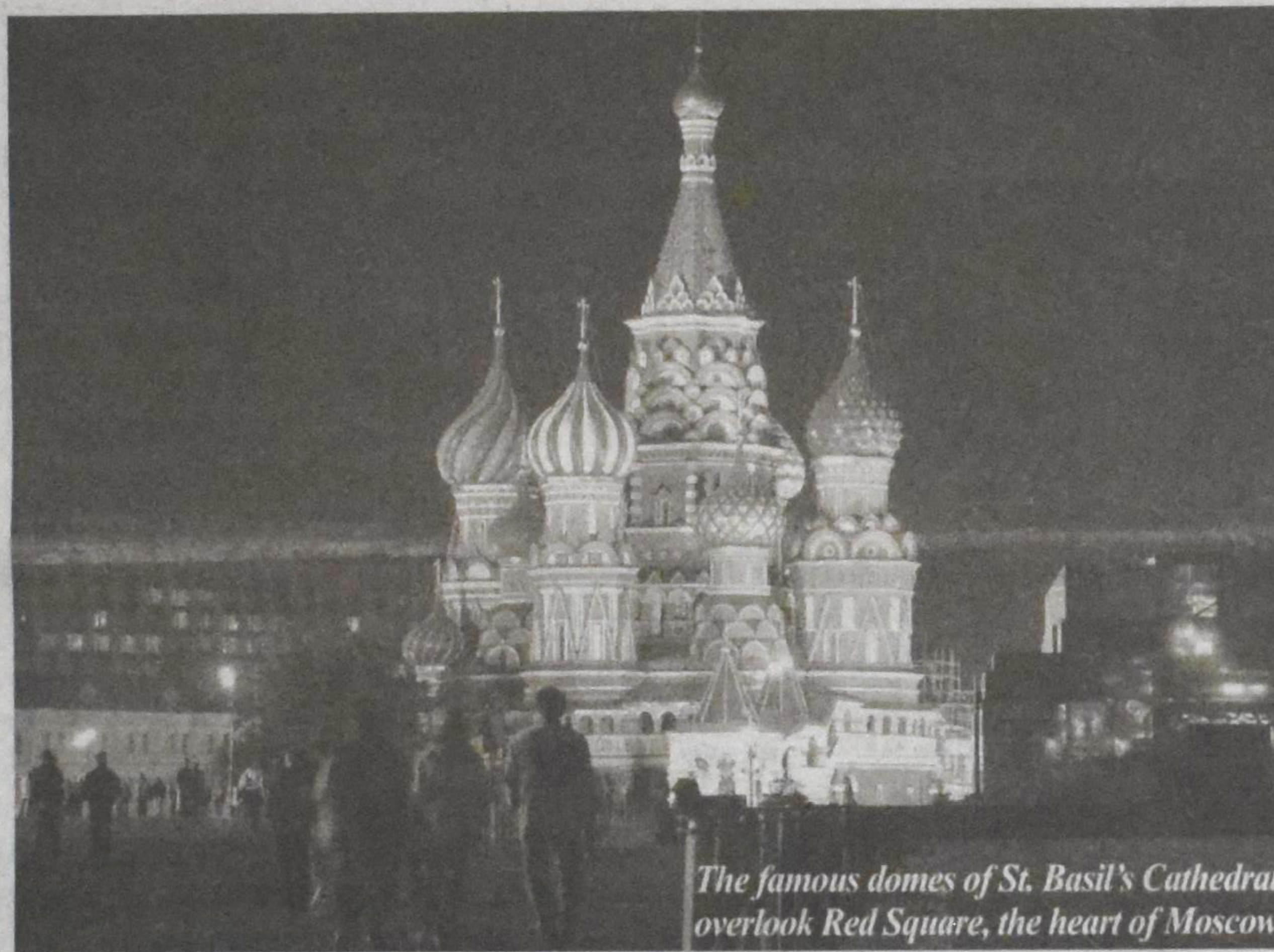
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Silencing the truth in Russia

Angela Reitsma Bick

MOSCOW, Russia — As journalists in dictatorial countries know, tighter control of the population is often accompanied by restricted press freedom. It is therefore worrisome that freedom of the press is in decline globally. A US organization called Freedom House just released a study that records a deterioration of press freedom “in every part of the world” in 2008, the most widespread drop since the study



The famous domes of St. Basil's Cathedral overlook Red Square, the heart of Moscow.

rights activist. Consequently, he was in a coma during World Press Freedom Day, which was May 3rd, and this state of artificial suspension symbolizes how free the press in Russia is today.

Journalists in peril

In an interview with the Berliner Zeitung, Russian reporter Grigori Pasko says that the Moscow-based Novaya Gazeta is the only truly independent newspaper left,

and its existence may be a token gesture on the part of the Kremlin. Pasko knows the risks of his profession firsthand. A few years ago, he filmed a Russian military boat dumping nuclear waste into the Japanese Sea. For making this news report public, he was convicted of treason and spent three years in jail.

One suburb of Moscow, Khimki, used to have three small newspapers. Anatoly Yurov is the editor of the only paper left, after one closed down and the other stopped publication when its editor was targeted. Yurov himself has been attacked three times, and on March 29 one of his reporters, Sergei Protazanov, was killed. He had been working on an article about electoral fraud in Khimki. Mikhail Beketov is the hospitalized rival. Last fall, he criticized local

government corruption and became the unofficial leader of a movement protesting a proposed highway from Moscow to St. Petersburg that would destroy Khimki's forest. As a result, assailants killed Beketov's dog, set his car on fire and then beat Beketov badly. He has been in a coma since last November.

Even more chilling is the double-murder this past January: a masked gunman used a silencer to shoot two people in the afternoon of January 20 on Moscow's “Golden Mile,” a densely populated street not that far from Red Square. The victims were a human rights lawyer called Stanislav Markelov and a young journalist called Anastasia Barburowa. It is probably not a coincidence that Markelov was the attorney for Beketov's family, the Khimki editor who remains in hospital,



Anastasia Barburowa
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Christian schools face unprecedented challenges

Chris Steenhof

SMITHERS, British Columbia — In the past year, the world's economic crisis has been a dominant theme in the news. While considerable emphasis has been placed on the impact of the crisis on employment, there has also been much written about its effect on the arts community, the sporting world, and the sphere of media entertainment.

Perhaps one area that has been ignored in the many words written about the economic slowdown is the educational world. For those involved in Christian education in Canada the issue is particularly relevant. Because most Christian schools charge tuition, an economic

crisis can severely affect enrollment, impacting programs and sometimes even putting into question the sustainability of a school. Across the country, many schools have struggled with this new reality — rethinking

A new generation of parents has difficulty finding room in the family budget for Christian education.

current programs, tightening purse strings and reenergizing recruitment and promotion.

The reality

The current financial crisis has affected various areas of the country differently. In resource-



Centennial Christian School in Terrace, British Columbia

based communities like Terrace, BC, the economic crisis has simply accentuated a longer term decline. According to Curt Tuininga, principal of Centennial Christian School in Terrace, “Our economic downturn has been happening for the past five years. The rest of the world is simply catching up.” Tuininga adds that the school has gone through significant change in

the last half decade, reducing staff by approximately 25 per cent.

In other parts of the country, however, it's hard to ignore that enrollment at Christian schools is shrinking after a period of stability and even growth. Henry Content, the executive director of SCSBC (Society of Christian Schools of BC), states that BC Christian schools may

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began in 1980. While journalists in North America may be worried about losing pay cheques, their colleagues in the Middle East and North Africa worry about losing their lives.

Russia has now become as dangerous as Baghdad and Addis Ababa for journalists, especially contentious ones. An increasingly authoritarian state has seized control of many media outlets, both print and television, accounting for “the biggest drop in press freedom” in the world last year, according to Freedom House's statistics. A series of attacks on Russian journalists — some resulting in death — has further shut down the operation of independent newspapers. And the attacks feel more like retribution than random distribution, for almost every victim can be linked to research he or she was doing that reflects badly on the government. The most recent assault, April 30, was on Yaroslav Yaroshenko, a Russian journalist and human

News

Christian schools *continued from page 1*

experience enrollment declines of between two and five per cent next year. Some schools in areas where parents are employed in the auto sector and other industries hit hard by the downturn are facing even steeper declines.

Tuition challenges

Some families are choosing less expensive educational options because of financial pressures. The vast majority of Christian schools charge tuition, even in provinces such as British Columbia and Alberta where schools receive various levels of government funding. Tuition varies throughout the country, ranging from next to nothing in fully-funded schools to fees over \$10,000 in schools with no government assistance. For many families, especially those with numerous children, this can be an intimidating barrier.

The impact of reduced enrollment is readily apparent. Many schools have recently been forced to reduce staffing levels by substantial amounts. One school principal mentioned that his school's board was just forced to reduce staffing by almost 20 per cent in one year. The process of laying off staff is problematic, adding further stress on administrators and school boards.

Reduced enrollment can also force schools to downsize their programs, especially at the high school level. This leads a Catch-22 situation. School boards must reduce programs to balance their budget, but must use these same programs to attract new parents. These cutbacks often affect valuable areas such as music, drama and sports.

Some of this can be attributed to a remodeling of the demographic landscape – there are simply fewer children in Canada. In Ontario, the number of students enrolled in all schools has decreased over the past five years. Still, many administrators point to economic realities as being a large part of the problem. In some resource communities, for example, families are moving to other areas of the country to find employment.

A variety of responses

Christian schools across the country have responded to this challenging time in different ways. Schools with a long history have weathered financial storms before, particularly the recession that struck the country in the early 1980's. Buoyed by high commodity prices, many schools in the west have just come through a financially robust period. But regardless of their financial history, Christian school administrators and boards have been forced to take action.

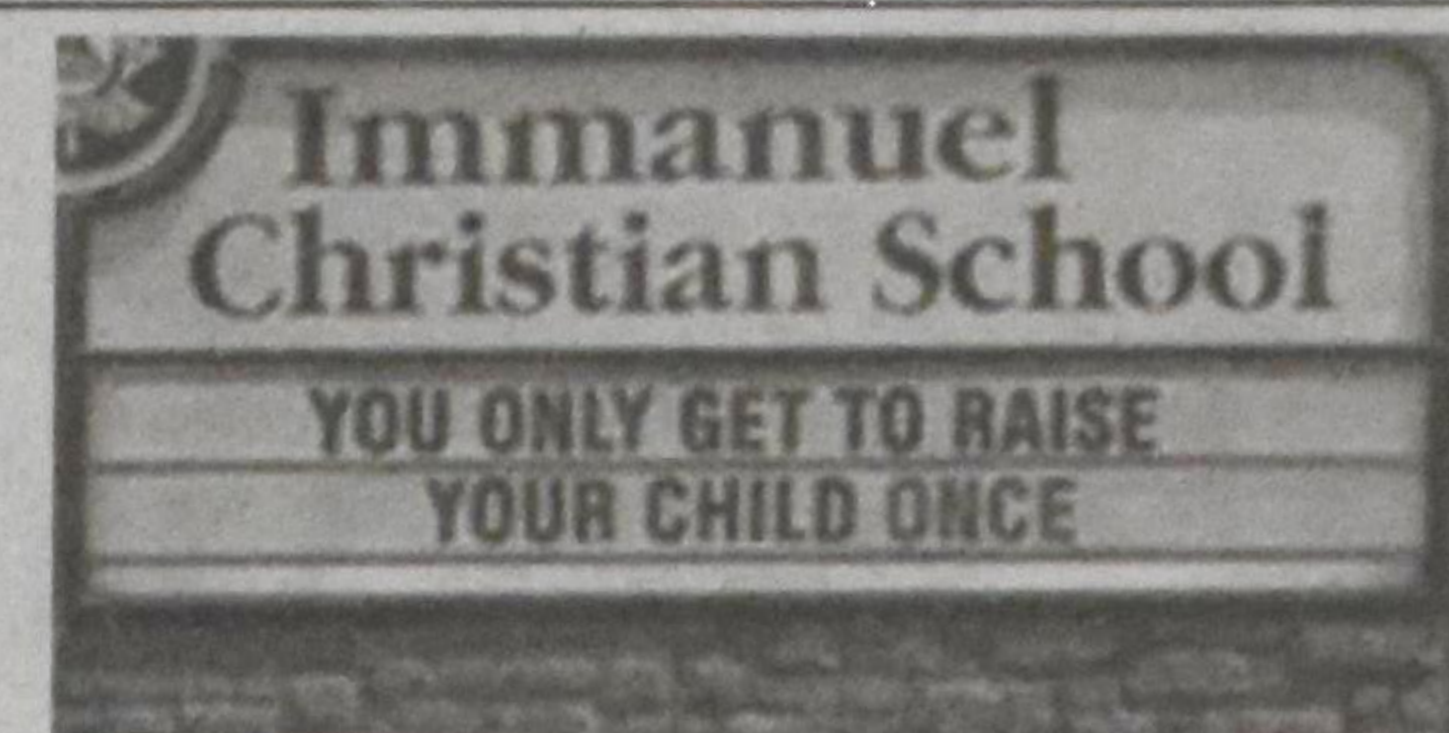
One point emphasized by several administrators is the need to work with individual families. For Jasper Hoogendam, principal of Immanuel Christian School in Oshawa, Ontario, the challenge is "to assure parents who are a bit nervous about what lies ahead." He has been encouraged recently by a high number

of enrollment inquiries despite the intensity of the economic uncertainty in his community.

Many schools are retooling their promotional efforts. For Tuininga this means, "Keeping our name in the forefront of people's minds" by getting school events in the community newspaper. It also means working with local church communities to make people aware of the programs of the school. Many schools have hired development directors to help in this regard. Often these positions also concentrate efforts on fundraising, seeking creative ways for schools to bolster their bottom line.

Expanding programs can also attract new students to a school. Many schools, including Maranatha Christian School in Windsor, Ontario, have started to recruit international students. These students bring a new source of income and can contribute to the ethnic diversity of a school. One school in British Columbia recently introduced a Distributed Learning program, offering online courses to home-educated students.

Some schools have also experimented with tuition rates, offering deep discounts or introductory rates to new parents. One school is even investigating the possibility of a pledge system for all parents, relying on fundraising alone to balance the budget. These approaches are coming to grips with a new generation of parents who find it difficult to find room in the family budget for Christian education. Many of these new parents are from church denominations where commitment to Christian education isn't an assumption.

**The future**

It's clear that the current economic climate requires a response from the Christian school community. Being unaware or simply reactive could lead to further declines and untenable situations. It's possible that in provinces like Ontario, future government funding of Christian Schools can relieve some of the pressure. But perhaps schools must concentrate on remaining vibrant despite smaller numbers.

Many administrators, however, stress that adapting to these new situations requires more than that. John Reems from Nanaimo Christian School on Vancouver Island expresses this well: "We have seen the Lord bless our desires through a large building project last year and have realized that so-called 'risks' is worldly terminology that deals with fear. In stepping out in faith we have experienced answers that remind us of God's faithfulness."

It is this attitude that must inform the response of Christian schools to our current financial troubles – trusting a God who provides for his people as well as a prayerful commitment to continuing the ministry of providing a Christ-centred education no matter the circumstance.

Chris Steenhof is a teacher and administrator who lives in Smithers, British Columbia.

**Russia** *continued from page 1*

and had also given council to several *Gazeta* employees. Barburowa, just 25 and still a student at Moscow State University, had been investigating Russian neo-Nazi groups as a freelancer for the *Novaya Gazeta*.

Government response

At a rally in early January, the human rights lawyer Markelov presciently said, "I am tired of seeing the names of my acquaintances appear as victims in the crime statistics. We need protection against the power of the mafia and the security authorities, which are often in the pockets of criminals." Journalists feel so vulnerable that *Novaya Gazeta*'s publisher has requested pistols for its reporters to carry in self-defence. The editorial offices of the *Gazeta* have a display for trophies, awards and certificates. The display includes a special shelf for photos of deceased employees: victims – they believe – of contract killings. Anna Barburowa is the fourth journalist associated with *Novaya Gazeta* to die. The police have, in every instance, been closer to obstructing than pursuing justice. The perpetrators are often described as hooligans, which downplays the organization and violence of their acts. Even worse, state-run papers often spread slander about the victims, muddying the issues. One such article suggested that Markelov and Barburowa were secretly involved in a relationship and the crime was committed by a jealous lover. In March, Khimki authorities

claimed that Sergei Protazonov died of "accidental poisoning" as a drug and alcohol abuser, which his editor Yurov says is untrue.

Current Russian President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin have promised to implement a new law which would allow reporters to safely investigate corruption. If this law passes, journalists will be able to apply for special protection, like court witnesses. So far, however, the government's promises have meant very little.

"In most of these cases," says Tatiana Lokshina, Moscow head of a Human Rights watch group, "there is no effective investigation being carried out." The Committee to Protect Journalists, a New York-based organization, reports that 43 journalists have been killed since 1992 for their profession in Russia. That works out to more than two a year. Only a few of these have been classified as murder, and none has been solved yet. It is not hard to pick up a pattern in the deaths, however; most of the victims were working on stories relating to Chechnya, organized crime or government corruption.



Dmitri Muratov (R), Novaya Gazeta editor, at a demonstration of "Reporters without Borders" in January.



Medvedev & Putin

The burden of constraint

Such a hostile working environment for journalists quickly leads to self-censorship. Russia's justice system seems unwilling "to protect journalists from attacks," according to Freedom House, and its independent media has been "frequently targeted" by regulators. Regardless of who is orchestrating the physical assaults, there are many other ways to intimidate the media. The Committee to Protect Journalists has documented scores of evictions, illegal layoffs, material confiscation, lawsuits, detention by militia and break-ins at editorial offices in Russia. Meanwhile, the government keeps its profile clean by allowing only pro-government journalists to press conferences. "Moreover," says jailed journalist Pasko, "they can only ask questions that the President's press staff has previously

agreed to." As for foreign journalists, they are easily kept out with visa restrictions, or "refused re-entry."

In a television interview with a CBS news correspondent, Russian investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya once said, "You have to be on the run all the time. Change clothes, stay awake simply to do your job, to collect information from both sides." That description sounds more like a Bond movie than reality, but Anna was the first *Novaya Gazeta* employee to be murdered for her work – not as a spy, but as a journalist seeking to bring the truth to light in Russia. Alongside the photos, her computer sits grimly in the display case at *Gazeta*'s headquarters. Two months ago, three suspects in her murder were acquitted in a trial that critics call a farce. Russia cannot claim to be a democracy when the space for dissenters has shrunk so dramatically, and when – in the words of Politkovskaya – "People sometimes pay with their lives for saying out loud what they think."

Angela Reitsma Bick spent one year teaching English in Moscow with her husband, Allan. They were living near Ostankino TV and radio tower when, in 2002, then-President Putin shut down TV-6, the second-to-last independent TV station. The remaining station closed a year later; all major television stations are now state-owned.



News

Storyteller wins grant to improve literacy in Sierra Leone

Angela Reitsma Bick, with files from CRCNA

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.—An education professor from Calvin College, Jo Kuyvenhoven, has received a \$50,000 federal planning grant to support her literacy work in Sierra Leone, west Africa. The money will be used to develop a reading syllabus for primary students in collaboration with Milton Margai College in Sierra Leone. Eventually, training colleges will instruct its teachers with the new curriculum.

Kuyvenhoven's interest in Sierra Leone began many years ago. She lived there for a year with three young children in 1984, and has returned many times to travel, to work and to visit friends. As a wonderful storyteller herself, Kuyvenhoven knows how to use narrative. Her own collection of stories has grown to include many Sierra Leonean folk tales, which she's integrated into the new curriculum. Local tales, familiar to children, make the material more effective.



Two years ago, with several other teachers, Kuyvenhoven ran a pilot study at a new Christian school in the northern city of Kabala. After a year of using her program, the

students tested significantly higher than their peers. "The grant enables me and my colleagues in Sierra Leone to take what I think is the most effective step for substantially affecting the success of teaching children to read," she says.

Troubled past

The violence of the recent civil war in Sierra Leone left the country with many problems. Despite the atrocities of the 1990's, however, Sierra Leoneans and many NGO's are working hard to repair the country's damaged infrastructure. This includes restoring or replacing educational materials, which were lost or destroyed during the war.

After telling her colleagues in Sierra Leone the news, Kuyvenhoven says, "Co-director Aske Gbla said 'Glory be to God' almost a dozen times when I told him. Another partner, Dr. J. Abdul Kargbo, said, 'They had mercy on a country where education is in tatters.'"

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Leveraging leisure into your lifestyle



It has become routine in our house that right after dinner my son Joseph immediately asks: "Play a bit?" What he means to say is this: "I realize the schedule dictates that I retire to my bedroom for the night, but I wish to squeeze out a few more precious moments with my recreation equipment."

The ironic thing is that he has done nothing other than play all day. In fact, his whole life is play. Sometimes, to our chagrin, even our discipline of him becomes something laughable.

Oh, to be a child again. When did things change? My wife and I have had seasons in the last few years where we work all day, and then, after our Leisure Lad has been lulled to sleep, we furiously type at our respective computers until midnight. It's as if we gradually grew out of play until work completely overtook us. Now we worriedly scramble as the pagans do (Matthew 6:32).

Sociologist Max Weber said the Protestant work ethic was a particularly Calvinist phenomena. A book title sums up the tradition: *When I Relax I Feel Guilty* (by T. Hansel, 1979). Is there a reason we have a Christian Labour Association but not a comparable Christian Leisure Association? If Reformed folk treasure an "all of life" faithfulness, why was the gym the last room to be added on my Christian school?

Leisure and licentiousness

In the last few decades a new discipline has crept into the university curriculum: "Leisure Studies." At Brock University where I was chaplain you could get a B.A. in "Recreation and Leisure Studies" – and it wasn't *all* fun and games. It was a multi-disciplinary program including courses in philosophy, psychology, sociology, geography, health studies, and environmental studies.

What is "leisure" anyway? The concept can be defined in a variety of ways. It can be considered "free time" that is not work, an activity that is recreational, or a state of mind – a relaxed feeling about life. It includes sports, wilderness retreats, and even cultural activities like humour and story-telling.

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman



Unfortunately, leisure for many today is about unquestionably "necessary" vacations to exotic locations and wasteful hobbies that require a small fortune to maintain. Leisure can be very narcissistic – focused only on one's own self-actualization; or it can be used as a status symbol – a form of conspicuous consumption. Leisure can be twisted into addictions and idols. No wonder some Christians are wary of it.

God commandeth leisure

Dr. Paul Heintzman is a Christian professor at the University of Ottawa who has extensively studied the relationship between leisure and faith. He points out that the (Greek) Septuagint translation of the Bible has Psalm 46:10 say: "Have leisure and know that I am God." Could leisure not only be a good part of the creation, but also necessary for a healthy relationship with God – for richer, for poorer, for both children and parents?

Josef Pieper definitely thinks so. He's a Roman Catholic philosopher who wrote an influential book called *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1952). In it he claims that leisure is best described as a "mental and spiritual attitude... an attitude of mind, a condition of the soul... not only the occasion but also the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation." The heart of leisure, he says, beats in celebration, and the life of celebration arises from worship.

You might even say that God put leisure right into the very fabric of creation when he rested after the first six days of the universe. He then commanded his human managers to follow the pattern and make Sabbath rest part of the rhythm of their culture. This includes worship festivals, feasts, and Jubilees as well.

So we ought to examine ourselves for our leisureliness. We might ask: does our life inadvertently reflect a higher value for work than play? Why? Calvin College has recently opened some spectacular facilities – including a climbing wall, tennis courts, and an indoor running track – to impress upon students the God-ordained leisure-inclusive life. Recreation can be a fount of re-creation.

I hope it is sinking back into my life, too. It's not always true, but some days I truly feel my work is also my leisure, and my leisure is doing my work. There is an "all of life" faithfulness that grows back in me, bringing me at once forward into God's worry-free kingdom and backwards to my play-friendly childhood.

Peter Schuurman lives in Guelph, Ontario where he parents his two children, Joseph and Petra. He is also part-time faculty at Redeemer University College, where he teaches World Religions.



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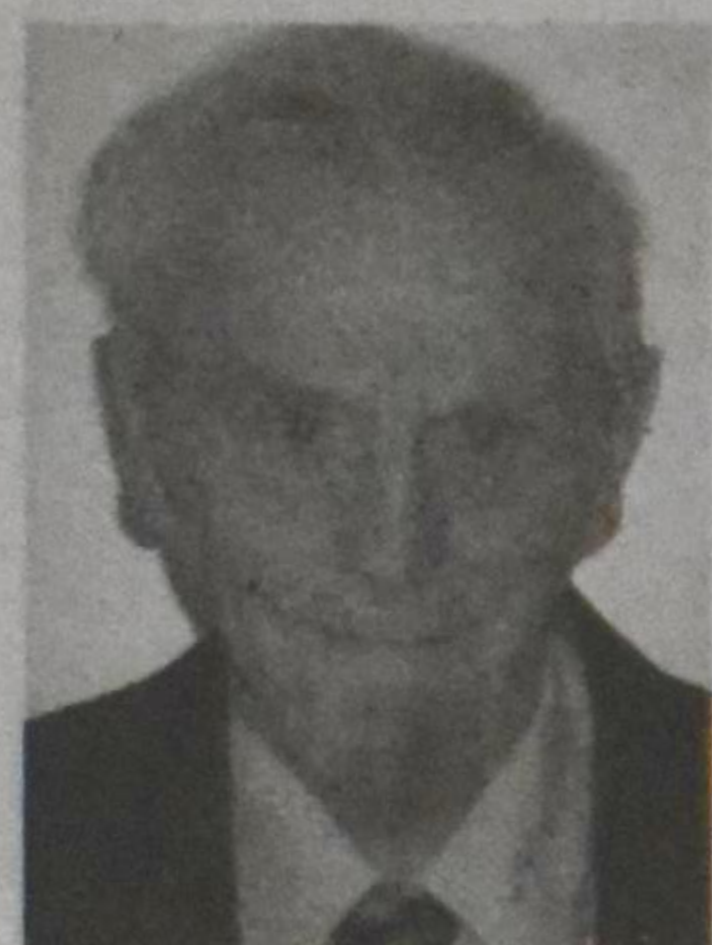
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Editorials

Two editorials about prostitutes

'No thank-you, I am working.'



Lou DeVries

The information I needed should be available in one of the offices in a downtown building. It took about ten minutes to drive there, but to my surprise there were no cars in the parking lot.

I stopped across the street trying to figure out what the problem was.

A young woman appeared from the side of the building, walked across the street towards me and asked if I was looking for someone.

I explained to her that I was trying to get some information from an office in this building, but it seemed that nobody was there.

"That's right" she said, "It is Remembrance Day today."

(That happens when you are retired; you never have an extra-day off, so you do not always think about this.)

She walked on and I stood there for a few seconds yet.

It was an uncomfortable day – cold and windy and a little bit of rain once in a while.

I drove away and caught up with her, opened my passenger side window and asked her if I could give her a ride somewhere. She looked at me and then said: "No thank you, I am working." She kept on walking.

I looked around, on the one side of the street was a construction site, all fenced in; there did not seem to be any other businesses open.

The only business that had lights on was two blocks away: a gas station.

The clarity of hindsight

That afternoon, I went for coffee with a friend of mine. I told him about the encounter I had with the young woman earlier that day.

"I am still wondering where that woman would have been working," I said.

To my surprise he started to laugh and, after addressing me with a word that questioned my intelligence, he told me that she was a prostitute. I protested, telling him she was not dressed like one.

"No wonder she was not, not on a day like this."

"She was nice and polite also."

"That is a first requirement if you want to do business."

I still did not believe him.

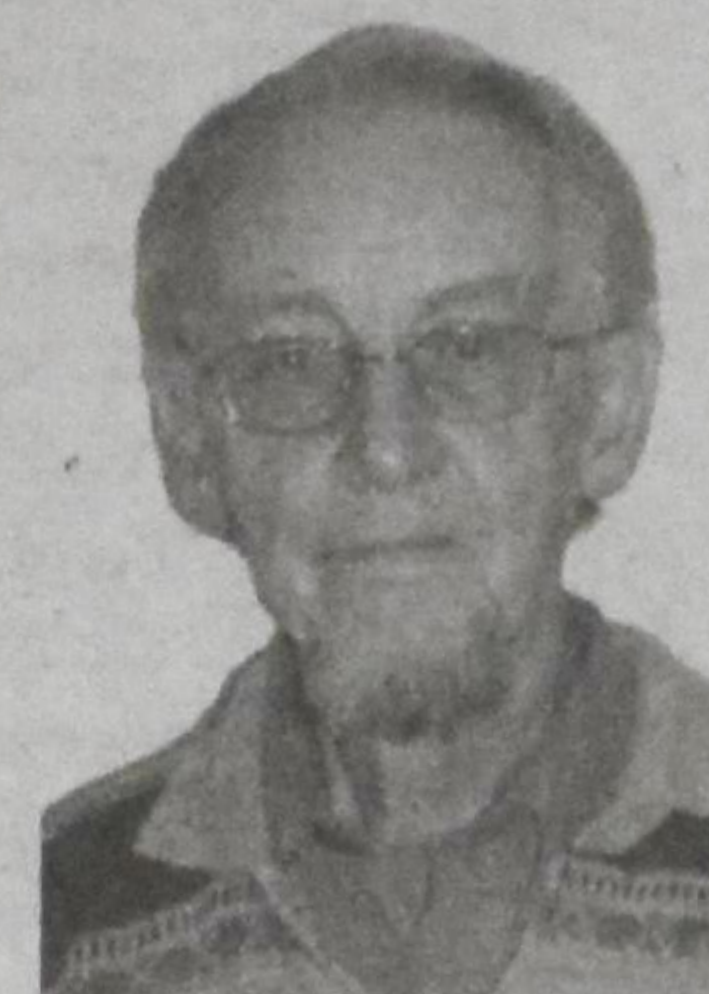
A few days later I was invited to have dinner with some friends. There were seven of us and I mentioned my experience with the young woman. When I said that she told me that she was working, everyone started to laugh. OK, I did get the message. I am probably not as bright as I think I am.

When I came home later that night I wondered why a good looking woman, or any woman for that matter, would look for that kind of work. It's been said that many of them are either drug addicts or alcoholics. I would like to hear from the horse's mouth, so to speak,

what the reasons are. I am wondering if many or at least some of them, as children, went to Sunday school or maybe to church, and why they left.

I will not look for an encounter like this, but if it does happen again and if she is interested to tell me some of her background, I will offer her fifty bucks – not to make use of her service, but to compensate her for her "wasted" time, take her for lunch somewhere and talk to her about my Christian faith. Maybe some "crumbs" of my faith will start or rekindle a fire that will lead her to recognize the fact that Jesus is the solution to her predicament also. (With a little bit of "luck," some of my friends will walk in and have lunch at the same time.)

She could have been my daughter



Bert Witvoet

A few years ago, I was driving from the north end of St. Catharines toward our home in the south end. A woman was standing at the curb of the street. She was hitchhiking. I decided to stop and give her a ride.

We greeted each other. Then almost immediately she said, "I suppose you are married?"

I said, "Yes."

"Have you always been faithful to you wife?"

"Yes, I have," I replied.

"Then I suppose you won't need my services?"

"No, I won't need your services," I said.

"That's nice to hear when men are faithful to their wives," she countered.

"Yes, but you are not helping the cause much, sister," I thought to myself. A few seconds later I resumed the conversation: "Why do you get into this line of work?"

She then told me how she had lost her husband 14 years ago. He had been depressed and, one afternoon, just before she stepped into the door, he shot himself in the kitchen. "Had I arrived a few minutes earlier, I might have been able to prevent it."

"Wow," I said. "That must have been a horrible experience for you. Did you have children?"

She told me about a son and a daughter, and how it was terribly hard on them.

I commiserated with her. "Is that what drove you into prostitution?"

"Not right away, but eventually I realized I needed more income. So I do it from time to time."

You could have been...

I looked at her. She looked quite attractive. She didn't look the stereotypical prostitute. Her dress was modest – a woollen vest, if I remember correctly. "How old are you?" I asked again.

"Forty-four."

"You are the same age as my oldest son. You could be my daughter."

She smiled.

"Do you respect the men that come to you?" I asked.

She almost said "Not always..." but then changed her answer. "I think a lot of them are lonely. And I am nice to them and make them feel better. I'm providing friendship."

By this time we had reached the spot where she wanted to get off. It had been only a kilometre or two that she was with me in the van. As she got ready to step out, I said to her, "I wish you wouldn't do what you are doing." I guess I thought of her as a possible daughter. She did not reply but thanked me for the ride.

I said, "God bless you."

That was it. I watched her walk towards a pub. Maybe that's where she planned to pick up her customers. It felt strange that I had actually helped her reach her place of work.

When my wife and I sat down for supper at home with my son and daughter-in-law, I told them about my encounter with a prostitute.

"Didn't you realize that she was a prostitute?" asked my daughter-in-law.

"It occurred to me that she might be," I said, "although she was dressed very modestly and looked like she might be going shopping and had missed the bus. But even if I had known for sure that she was a prostitute, I still would have given her a ride. She is a human being and I am not afraid of talking with prostitutes."

Good mentors

One reason I am not repelled by prostitutes has to do with what I have heard about my dad, who died in Holland when I was 11 years old. An uncle of mine told me the story. My uncle was walking with my dad on the Main Street of our town. They came to an intersection where a young woman was standing. My dad knew her as a local prostitute. She seemed to be afraid of entering the narrow street on which she lived. My dad asked her what the problem was. "There's a man waiting for me," she said, "and I'm afraid of him."

"Come with me," my dad said, and offered her his arm. My uncle decided to take her other arm, and together they marched the woman past a surly-looking customer.

"I respected your dad for that," my uncle told me. "He was not worried about what the local people might think about his action."

I'm sure that my dad put a stamp on my life through this and other compassionate actions. I'm also influenced by what Jesus did when they brought a prostitute to him. He told bystanders, "Those of you who are without sin, cast the first stone." And then he told the accused woman he was not going to judge her. But he urged her to stop her sinning.

I can almost hear him say, "I wish you wouldn't do what you are doing."

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Letters

Christian Reformed Church does not back FAREL

Re: Reformed seminary recognized by Canadian government, April 13

The recognition of our seminary is a momentous event for FAREL and for the Reformed presence in Quebec and the francophone world in general. I should point out however that this recognition comes from the government of Quebec. Which does not diminish its importance, because, if I am not mistaken, university education in Canada falls under the authority of the provincial governments.

There is, however, another point I should make and that is that FAREL does no longer have the "backing of the Christian Reformed Church." Allow me to explain.

Steps to the establishment of FAREL started at the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1981. At this synod a special ad hoc committee was formed "for theological education in Quebec." I was appointed to assist the Reformed Evangelical Alliance in its effort to "establish a training school for pastors and lay leaders for the Reformed Churches in Quebec." This led to the establishment of the "Institut Farel."

In 1985 I fell ill and could no longer function in that role. The synod then took the decision to terminate the ad hoc committee mentioned above and to entrust the responsibility for Institut Farel to the Home Mission Board. The next year this Board told synod that "the Home Mission Board does not engage in this kind of project," and the matter was dropped. That was the end of the "backing of the Christian Reformed Church."

I am deeply grateful to the other Reformed Churches who have come forward to support the project, now known under the single and capitalized name "FAREL." I can only hope that individual Christian Reformed Churches and perhaps even classes would indicate their disagreement with the actions of the Home Mission Board, by continuing support for FAREL or by taking up support for this cause which is so important for the Reformed Presence in Quebec and the rest of the francophone world.

Martin D. Geleynse,
Stratford, Ontario

How do we read Obama?

I want to respond to a recent editorial by Peter Schuurman on Barack Obama. Is Obama a committed Christian? Does he have real faith in Jesus Christ? How do we read him? When I read the article, it appeared to me that Barack has real doubts.

Obama already in 1988 became a member of the Trinity United Church of Christ. Even after his Pastor Jeremiah Wright scandalized him, he reminded his fellow Americans that Wright was the man who "... helped to introduce me to the Christian faith, a man who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another, to care for the sick and lift the poor ..., and who for 30 years led a church that serves the community by doing God's work here on Earth."

Schuurman seems to run down Obama's parental upbringing as something not very Christian. On the basis of a book he read, he lets us peek through a window into Obama's soul. And he lists a set of books - *The Bible*, the *Koran*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In my parents' house these books were also available, for early in my life we children were taught about the many different religions. Very early on we were taught that we were not to condemn people who were either Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and other non-Christians to hell. We had to treat the indigenous adults with respect and honor and NOT judge them. When I came to Holland in 1946, I discovered that most Dutch people knew nothing about Muslims and believed they would all go to hell!

Another statement Schuurman quotes from Obama is "His religion is 'a faith that admits doubt, and uncertainty, and mystery.'" I am past my 78th year. My life has been full of doubts, uncertainties and lots of mysteries. Several times I have been near death, and I had a near-death experience in 2004. I thank the Lord that he let me live, though I was ready to meet him face to face. I experienced two wars, spent time in concentration camps, was often hit

by the enemy and was once confronted with a possible execution. Of course, I wanted to live. At times I was doubtful whether God existed, or uncertain whether I was forgiven for all the evil sins we as Dutch white Christians had done to thousands, may be millions, of Indonesians. After all, we had ruled over them and exploited them for over 300 years. Of course, the Dutch did a lot of good, but we also fathered uncounted, orphaned "half-breeds" over these three centuries of Dutch colonial rule. This is a reality we have to face.

I have followed Obama since early 2004, even mailed him a book and got an answer. A careful appraisal of his first three months in action as the 47-year-old President of the U.S. must tell us that this man's theme in life is not a PASTICHE, a hodgepodge of conflicting themes. He is a very dedicated and disciplined individual and, perhaps, a bit cocky. A careful analysis of his policies, statements and the ever-present smile on his face tells us that the man is quite committed to the welfare of the country he serves. It is the most enjoyable President the world has had after all the Bushes, Reagan and Clinton.

I often ask myself whether I have prayed enough for him, his family and the nation he leads, because, in a way, the U.S.A. is still the leading power on this small planet Earth. Our heavenly Father has often used people we thought belonged outside his power. He surprised us with a Nelson Mandela, who brought a total change to South Africa's government of Apartheid. Is it possible that Barack Obama with all his shortcomings, but confessing his dependence on God, is being used by our heavenly Father, who gave us his only Son, the living, physical image of the invisible God?

Please, let's give "outsiders" a chance.

Aren Geisterfer,
Ottawa, Ontario

In response to CC's question of April 27 "How have economic changes affected your family, your community and church, and how have you responded?" we received the following letter:

No more surprises

After reading your call for CC readers to put their names indelibly in ink in CC, I have decided to respond to how the economy has affected our family. Earlier this year, my wife, Allison, and I sat down and discussed what changes we could make in our lives in light of the current recession. We made a list of all the things where our money would typically go, and then came up with a plan to make some changes. Here are a few examples: We looked at all our monthly bills and made a plan to see if we could reduce our monthly spending. After making some phone calls to our various service providers, we were, within a week or two, able to reduce our monthly bills for our long distance phone plan, cable service, internet service, and house insurance. Our car insurance is coming up for renewal in the next month, so our plan is to look at other providers and see if we can reduce that as well without reducing our coverage.

Other changes we instituted include not going to the theatre to watch movies, eating out at restaurants as little as possible, and a big one, NO TIM HORTONS! We also discussed breaking down every purchase as either a "want" or a "need." If it's a "need," then it is okay; if it's a "want," then we have to walk away from it. Neither my wife nor I really "need" any new clothes, so we have put off shopping for new clothes for the year (except for our children, who keep growing). Also, over the past few years, we paid for everything on our credit card as we collect airmiles with all of our purchases. The trouble is - we are sometimes surprised by the bill at the end of the month as all those little charges have added up into a large total. So now we put all our gas, groceries and large purchases on credit card so that we still collect airmiles, but for the rest we use cash or our debit card so it is easier to keep track of our bank account. This way there are no surprises at the end of the month when it's time to pay off our credit card bill.

All of these things we wrote down on a list and then placed it on the fridge as a reminder to watch our spending. It has worked, and we have seen a change in our spending habits as well as in our bank account. There have, of course, been exceptions, but we look upon our decisions as guidelines to follow, not as rules never to be broken. After all, the world we live in is not black and white.

Steve Witvoet,
Vernon, B.C.

Wrong spokesperson

We enjoy most of the articles in the *Christian Courier*, but sometimes we're disappointed about what we read in a Reformed bi-monthly, like the article "He is risen" by Pope Paul John II. What he writes is biblical, but he's still the head of a church that does not believe that we're saved "in Christ alone, by faith alone." I pray that we'll publish only Reformed writers in C.C.

Pauline Van Noord,
Springfield, Ontario

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Letter/Calling

A harsh voice in a vacuum

Koen Zondag

Now and then a friend of mine sends me articles published in the Christian Courier. While reading the contributions in the February issue about the Dutch politician Geert Wilders and the ex-Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali, I felt the need to formulate some corrections.

Ideological feathers

The Dutch political landscape has been characterized by three mainstream groups: the Christian-Democrats, the Liberals and the Socialists. The first two groups happily formed a number of cabinets in the past. On a few occasions Christian-Democrats and Socialists cooperated, but never wholeheartedly.

In 1994 the unlikely happened: Liberals and Socialists, each other's opposites, established a cabinet together. The basis was a simplified and almost divine economic principle: the Market. The prime-minister, a Socialist, declared openly that he had shaken off his "ideological feathers."

The Christian-Democrats, who dominated the centre of power for decades, were watching from the sidelines. Their time would come again. However, the representatives of this political movement did not realize or insufficiently realized that the religious landscape was changing. The Netherlands, from time immemorial a rather secular country, had turned into a country where Christians are a minority, and this development had and has its consequences for the political domain.

Adrift

If political leaders renounce their principles or bend with the rhythm of the time their constituents get into trouble. Then it's very easy to cause a substantial political landslide. This also was the case here; some facts changed the process and gained momentum. On September 11, 2001, two airplanes, flown by two adherents of Bin Laden, destroyed the Twin Towers. The attack had a great impact on the world, also in the Netherlands. However, there were other serious developments. The former professor Pim Fortuyn expressed openly his disgust with Islam. His line of reasoning was that the Netherlands would be Islamic in the years ahead. His statements affected many people positively and negatively. A Dutch environmental activist assassinated Fortuyn in May 2002. The nation went into shock and mourned his death.

National elections were held a couple of weeks after his assassination. The party called LPF (List Pim Fortuyn) got 26 members, i.e. 17.3 per cent of the seats in parliament. The Christian-Democrats formed, without too many scruples, a government with this unstable, one-issue party. It turned out to be a disaster. The cabinet led by the Christian-Democrat Jan Peter Balkenende spent more time quarreling than governing. (Presently Balkenende is the prime-minister of a cabinet consisting of Christian-Democrats and Socialists.)

The last example I want to mention is *Submission*, a film developed by Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali. In this film the oppression by Muslims was criticised severely. A young Dutchman, converted to Islam, totally disagreed with the film and murdered Van Gogh. The facts mentioned above caused despair: what kind of country are we living in?

Pied Piper

Paul Scheffer, a prominent member of the Socialist Party, knew an answer to that question: our country suffers from "a multicultural drama" and "tolerance groans with the burden of neglected maintenance." The article was really dynamite. The result? Political leaders with ruffled feathers or voicing hollow words about virtues limited themselves to lip service. In such a vacuum other people come into

My inspiration: Adam, the first scientist

Why do we believe and accept the results of science? One obvious answer is that science is legitimated by its results: science works. I take medicines that help me get well. I am writing this on a computer, I will send it to the editor through cyberspace, and you can now read it on newspaper printed by digitalized printing presses. This is one answer, and it provides grounds for respecting and learning more about scientific findings.

As a Christian scientist, however, I am motivated to do science because I believe that God has created and sustains his creation. All who acknowledge God as Creator can find justification and rationale for science – for studying God's creation – in the creation narratives of Genesis, two verses in particular. In the first verse, chapter 1:26, God says, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion." This passage is often used, and rightly so, to describe our responsibility for and authority over creation. With this responsibility and authority come the need to understand creation, which is what science does. Science gives us the tools to predict, understand, control, and be responsible for creation.

I would like to focus more on the second verse, in chapter 2:19, where the narrator describes Adam's naming of the animals: "So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name."

Have you ever considered how strange this event is? Here the Triune God, referred to by John as the Word present "in the beginning" (John 1:1), gives his newly minted creature the opportunity to make up words – and then, even more amazingly, he accepts the words Adam offers for his fellow creatures.

Naming is thus one of the first responsibilities that God has given humans. This responsibility is at the heart of what scientists do: we describe and give a name to aspects of God's creation. Words describe and link items. If we name something, it acquires a meaning and a place. Some things are linked to other things and given some common label, while in other cases differences are noted and given separate names.

One of the most famous scientific formulas, Einstein's $E=mc^2$, is a description that connects two formerly separate parts of our world, mass and energy. These two concepts are now linked in the same way

as two words joined in a dictionary. When you say mass, energy is now a second word that is partially defined.

The task of naming is not simple. In labeling mental illnesses, for example, sometimes it is not clear where the border of one illness stops and a second illness begins. Sitting on my bookcase is an 886-page volume titled *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition* (1994), commonly known as the DSM-IV. Detailing scientists' best understanding of mental disorders, this volume enables us to look for ways to prevent them and determine how to treat them.

Staggering and a bit scary is the fact that I could fill a four-drawer filing cabinet with scientific papers published since 1994 that expand on or take exception to what is described in the DSM-IV. Clinicians and scientists are working on what will probably come to be known as the DSM-V: a bigger, updated, and probably still-controversial replacement for the DSM-IV.

Why is this type of naming and description important? If we want to help people with mental disorders, we need to accurately group problems that are the same. This will permit us to explore their causes and progress to find ways to prevent or reverse their ill effects. If our name for an illness is incorrect or incomplete, then our treatment may be ineffective or even do more harm. What works for bipolar disorders that afflict people who are depressed may not help people with "simple" depression. Researchers and clinicians studying mental illness generally agree that the lack of a good taxonomy is significantly hindering our progress.

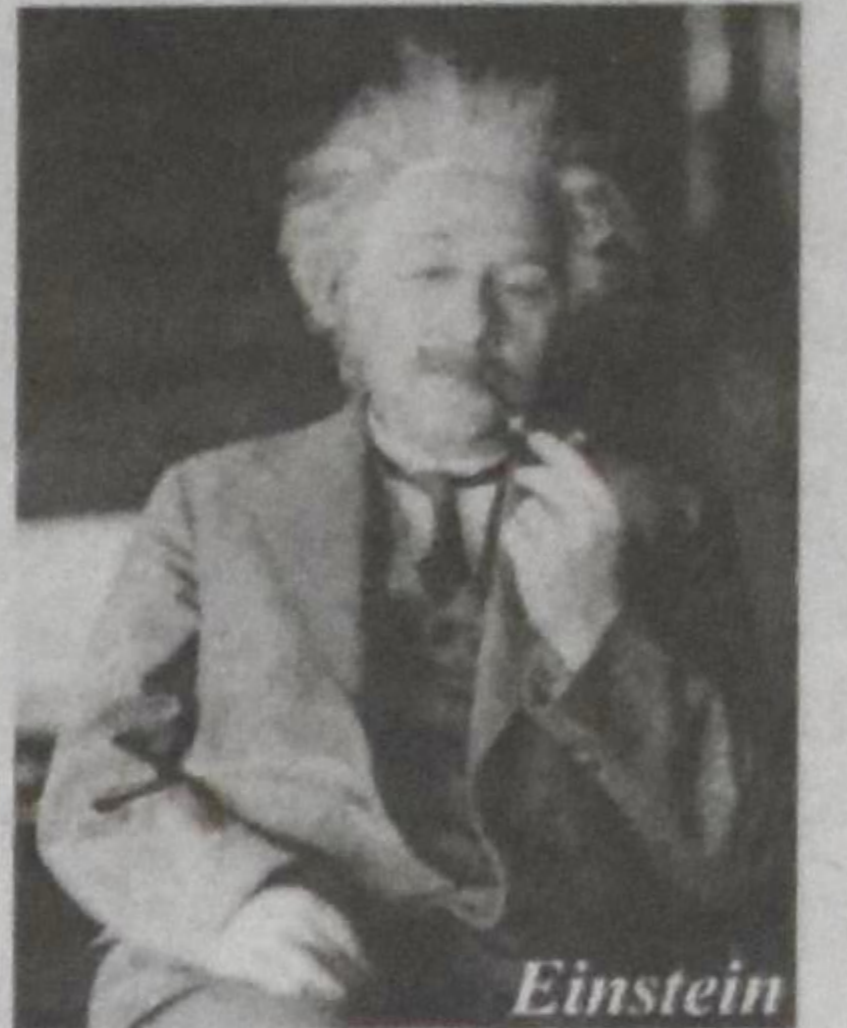
As a behavioural neuroscientist, I, too, am involved in naming. Good science makes profound connections between large parts of God's creation. In my small way as a scientist, I attempt to do the same: name and link parts of God's creation, because this is what my Lord has called me to do. I find my inspiration in Adam: the world's first scientist.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@whu.ca) is associate professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario



From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom



Einstein

power. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a renegade eagerly following the path of present secularism and the Islam phobia called up by Fortuyn, caused so much upheaval that Islamics (even of the second or third generation), aware of the submission of Islam, didn't feel at ease with a person showing such an extremely deviant behaviour and, to quote an Islamic proverb, one who is spitting in the well she has been drinking out of.

What about Geert Wilders? He, the leader of a party without members, avoids a discussion with the Muslims, in parliament his main goal seems to be to insult, and journalists are not allowed to attend meetings of his party. Wilders proclaims freedom of speech. However, other voices, especially those of Muslims, are excluded.

His harsh voice is (to be heard) in a political vacuum and the voters at drift are following the leader. "However, massive support is often dubious," the late Dutch sociologist J.A.A. van Doorn (1925-2008) said. Politicians who ought

to speak up keep silent and they don't have the courage to formulate frankly the mutual responsibilities of autochthones and allochthones and the limits of cultural independence. In this vacuum the populist experiences no hindrance.

It is possible that his movement will become the largest party in parliament after the next national elections in 2011. If this happens, Wilders is in control. Some (conservative) Christian-Democrats seem to be willing to form a coalition with this Pied Piper of Hamelin. If this happens, only one conclusion can be drawn: what a pitiable nation!

Koen Zondag (1938) was a research officer for bilingualism and bilingual education. He wrote or edited many books and articles (in English) about these subjects. Since his retirement (1999) he spends most of his time on theology, especially concerning Jewish scholars like Abraham Joshua Heschel and Franz Rosenzweig.

Awareness



Birds abound in some green suburbs

Greenville, South Carolina, located east of the Smoky Mountains on the Piedmont Plateau, has the largest area of suburban sprawl of any city I've ever visited.

Before you put down this column as one more polemic against suburbia, all its values, and everything wrong with North American society, let me add that the Greenville suburbs must have one of the healthiest populations of songbirds I've seen outside of wilderness, parks, or refuges.

Without binoculars, staying mostly in the confines of three suburban yards and one small Canada-goose-infested pond, I commonly (as in "nearly every day") saw catbirds, mocking-birds, robins, brown thrashers, goldfinches, two kinds of grackles, blue jay, eastern bluebirds, mourning doves. . . and that's just a start.

I saw a Cooper's hawk being hazed by a common grackle (I think James Fenimore Hawk may have had Baby Grackle in his talons) right here in the subdivision called Dove Place. Cardinals – sometimes called "Moderators of the General Assembly" in this Presbyterian heartland – whistled almost non-stop. Behind Henry's Barbeque Restaurant ("home of the best butt in the South" – pork sandwich), a pair of wood ducks courted in a creek a few metres from the mother-of-all-grease-vents.

Squirrels were everywhere, apparently having decided that songbird eggs taste good – scrambled or in nut-omelets. Mockingbirds also had egg on their faces as they mimicked the laments of the birds whose nest they had just raided.

The state bird – the Carolina wren – sang his throat out while stuffing birdhouses full of wife-attracting, spiny hawthorne twigs.

Being shielded by shrubbery from nearby highway noise, I sat on the patio and listened to a non-stop concert of songbirds, performing their variations on fecundity and joy.

This being late April in the South, yards were full of azaleas blooming, trees were leafed out, rhododendron busting near bursting open, and tulip poplars were just beginning to flower. The cherries, magnolias, and dogwoods were finished blooming, but now showing forth their new, nearly unspoiled greenery.

"What is all this juice and all this joy?" asks G.M. Hopkins in his famous sonnet, "Spring." In this case I would say that the proximate cause of all these healthy populations of native birds is an environmentally healthy sort of landscaping.

We're talking suburban yards here, with large trees – like tulip poplars, pines, hemlocks, cypress, maples and oaks. Lawns, while ubiquitous, were limited in size. Large front-yard areas beneath trees were mulched with pine straw and planted with shade-loving shrubbery.



VISITORS NOT WELCOME! A male Carolina wren jammed John & Wilma Crawford's birdhouse with hawthorne twigs to attract a mate and discourage guests.

The resultant habitat was varied – it contained represent-ative open spaces (lawns, flower beds), hedgerows (shrubby and trimmed hedging) and mature forest canopy – a mix of habitats, strong on what naturalists call the "edge effect."

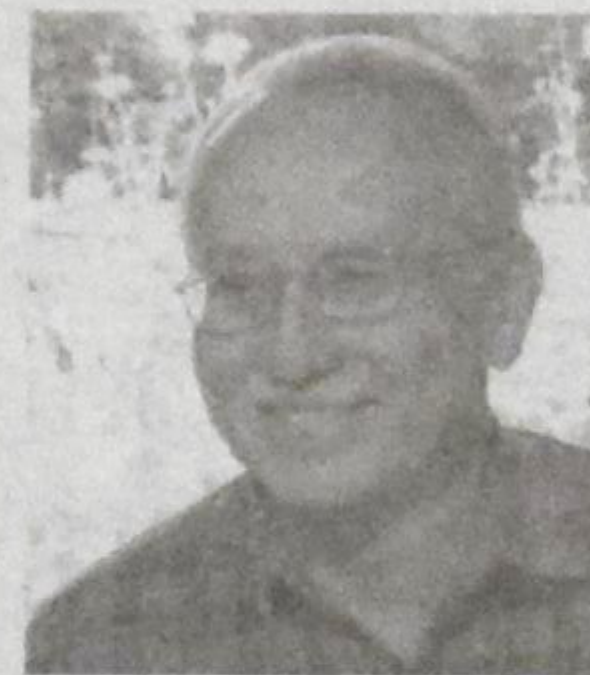
Human habitation may often disrupt wildlife populations, but I've been privileged to spend a week in a large suburban area where climate, native vegetation, and human landscaping expectations (whether accidental or intentional) have resulted in a relative harmony between the need of people and their avian neighbours.

"What is all this juice and all this joy?" asked Hopkins. His own answer is that it is . . . "A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning / In Eden garden."

Suburbia may not be Eden, but to me I hear the echo, the strain, and chorus, and the doxology . . . of Eden garden.

(I would write more but I just spotted a black vulture circling the highway; I take that as an omen sent from the editor that this column is approaching maximum length.)

Curt Gesch (curtgesch@hotmail.com) writes from Greenville, South Carolina; Hamilton, Ontario; and Quick, British Columbia.



Moments of ministry in chaplaincy

Read 1 John 3:16 - 20

It is one of the most terrifying sounds among all the noises that people can hear. It is that dreadful clang of a cell door being shut behind a prisoner. It shuts a person out of all that is normal for people who live in freedom. This particular inmate went into a deep depression after hearing it. For reasons unknown he was in solitary confinement, and the only other people he saw at regular intervals were the guards. He had not touched his food for more than three days when one of the guards alerted the chaplain. The chaplain spoke to the man through the bars of his cell. He introduced himself, asking "How are you doing?" The prisoner did not answer. When his silence continued, the chaplain read a few verses from his pocket Bible and then closed his eyes, starting to pray. But even before he uttered his first word, the prisoner blurted out: "God won't forgive me."

"Why not?" the chaplain asked. "I can't tell you that," the man said, but I know for sure that there is no forgiveness for me." "Come here to me," the chaplain said. And as the man came forward and almost leaned his head against the bar, the chaplain put his hand on the man's scalp and prayed: "God, you forgave so many for so much. Let this man know that you will forgive him too." A couple of days later one of the guards said to the chaplain, "Hey, that guy you visited is eating again."

Prayer

We all have sinned. At times the memories of our transgressions become like a heavy burden on our minds. Send then your Spirit to convince us again and again that you forgive all our sins.

Carl Tuyl

(ctuyl@rogers.com) is a retired CRC minister living in Toronto

Keeping public justice on the political agenda

Chandra Pasma

OTTAWA – The economic crisis has quite rightly received a lot of attention lately. Job losses are adding up as the automotive, industrial and construction sectors are reeling. Many other Canadian businesses and organizations are feeling the pinch as laid-off Canadians stop spending and those with jobs start saving their income.

The recession demands a response from government, as employment insurance (EI) is insufficient to help the unemployed and credit dries up. There are concerns that if the recession is not eased, we could see another Great Depression.

But in the rush to stimulate our economy, there is a danger that some fundamental questions about our

approach to economic growth are ignored, while many other crucial issues are overlooked.

Before this recession began, over 3 million Canadians were already experiencing their own economic crisis. They lacked sufficient income to meet their basic needs, and had to make difficult choices between rent, food, clothing, and heat.

While many people have focused on the problems with the EI system, no one is paying attention to those who experienced that same kind of vulnerability before the recession. In March, the House of Commons and the Senate unanimously passed a joint motion calling on the G-8 and the G-20 countries to make poverty reduction a priority in responding to this crisis. But that recommendation

has virtually been ignored here at home.

Eclipsed by the economy

The environment appears to be another casualty of the recession. Last fall, the environment was an election issue for the first time in Canada. Parties had proposals for a carbon tax, a cap-and-trade system and increased regulation. As the election progressed, the environment disappeared from the debate as fears for the economy grew.

The government's budget in January missed the opportunity to offer a green stimulus package. It appears concerns over climate change and environmental devastation have been put on hold until the economy recovers. But unless we adopt new

economic practices that do not endanger the environment, we have not really solved the financial crisis. We will have only extended the environmental crisis and ensured that we will have a new economic crisis in the future.

One area that has seen some quiet focus is human trafficking. A number of private member's bills have been presented in the House of Commons, focusing on mandatory minimum sentences and support for victims. However, while anti-trafficking legislation may be a priority for individual members of Parliament, it does not appear to be a priority for the government. As we approach the 2010 Olympics, Canada needs to be prepared to combat trafficking in a serious way.

Chandra Pasma is a policy analyst for Citizens for Public Justice in Ottawa.



Church

Queen's medal pulled for being too Christian

LONDON (Christian Today) – A medal created by Queen Elizabeth II has been replaced by a new award after having all references to Christianity removed from it. The previous medal was deemed offensive to Muslims and Hindus.

The Trinity Cross of the Order of Trinity, which is given to outstanding individuals from Trinidad and Tobago, was declared unlawful and subsequently will give way to the new Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the *Daily Mail* reported.

People who have received the award include Trinidad and Tobago residents and cricketers Brian Lara and Garfield Sobers, as well as diplomats and politicians.

The original medal was in the shape of a cross. The new circular medal has been stripped of all religious symbols; instead, it features water, a sun and a map of Trinidad and Tobago. The medal was first established by the Queen in 1969 and was the third highest decoration, after the Victoria



and George Crosses.

The original medal has now been declared unlawful by the Privy Council, which consists of 12 law lords, who argued that the medal discriminates against non-Christians. Following the decision, Anand Ramlogan, attorney for the Hindu group Maha Saba, said, "It's a vindication of the 40 years of disquiet and unease silently suffered by the Muslim and Hindu communities whose legitimate grievance with the Trinity Cross was flippantly dismissed by successive governments." Maha Saba and the Islamic Relief Centre have been campaigning against the medal since 2004.

Last year the government of Trinidad and Tobago announced the creation of the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The country received its independence in 1962. A large majority of its people are Christian. Hindus make up 24 per cent Hindu and Muslims five per cent of the population.

U.S. Hate Crimes Bill may hinder Christian broadcasters

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Christian Post) – The U.S.'s largest group of Christian media professionals is warning that the expanded Hate Crimes bill currently before the U.S. Senate presents a serious risk of violating free speech rights of religious communicators.

The Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act was introduced in the Senate in two weeks ago, just after the House passed its version in a 249-175 vote. It is expected to pass the Senate despite protest from Christian and socially conservative groups.

The legislation is intended by its sponsors to protect homosexuals and transgendered people from violent hate crimes by expanding a list of federally protected groups to include sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and disability.

But the 1,400-member National Religious Broadcasters says Christian broadcasters and even pastors covering culturally unpopular views, such as preaching homosexuality as sin, could face prosecution just for expressing their religious views because their teachings could be blamed for inciting violence.

"Bottom line is we think that the bill under this language, while it's touted as something as designed to crack down on violence and hate-inspired crime, in fact can be used to prosecute non-violent crimes," NRB senior vice president and general counsel Craig Parshall told *The Christian Post*. "The bill has a chilling effect on the right of communicators to articulate and preach the full counsel of God."

Parshall said if the hate crimes legislation is made into law, Christian communicators could face prosecution for religious speech through already existing federal incitement and conspiracy laws.

For example, a prosecutor might argue that an attacker was inspired by a sermon against homosexuality and consider religious broadcasters or pastors who gave the message as "causal factors" in a violent crime.

The government will always win

The extent of the hate crimes legislation goes beyond those who address homosexuality, Parshall also pointed out. Christian communicators who preach on sexual sin in general, such as adultery, and the definition of marriage or teach apologetics that compare other religions to Christianity would also be at risk, he said.

The Senate version of the Hate Crimes Bill targets alleged

perpetrators who attempt to "cause bodily injury to any person, because of the actual or perceived religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability of any person."

Parshall said the term "bodily injury" could be used to apply to mental trauma or mental or emotional impairment such as intimidation.

Although the Senate version contains provisions that appear to protect constitutional speech and free expression, Parshall contends they are just "nice political banter" for debate and not substantial protection for free speech. That's because the U.S. Supreme Court and Court of Appeals' interpretation of constitutional rights has been eroding to the point that the Court has eviscerated free expression, he argued.

"If it's ever a contest of the power of government on one hand and the person's right of religious expression, the government will always win," said Parshall.

'Ripple-out effect'

Parshall said he has been working very closely with NRB vice president of government relations Bob Powers in meeting with senators and state representatives to insist that protections for Christian communicators be included in the bill. It's what is not written that can later be used against religious speech, he said.

Legal groups specializing in constitutional rights, including the American Center for Law and Justice and Alliance Defense Fund, have also been working with the NRB to propose revised language for the bill. So far, the groups are still looking for a senator to sponsor an amendment to change the language.

Parshall added that his biggest concern is not with the hate crimes legislation itself but the "ripple-out effect" after the bill is passed.

He noted that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has before it a petition to investigate "hate" on conservative radio. Private employers, including churches and Christian schools, could be pressured to accept workers regardless of sexual orientation, such as suggested in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Public education could also be affected, he said.

"The Hate Crimes Bill is not only dangerous in itself but creates an environment of the censorship of ideas that are culturally unpopular," said Parshall.

Journalist-author: Canadian evangelicals have 'image problem'

Marian Van Til

OTTAWA – A former reporter and current journalism professor has written a book which posits that Canadian evangelicals have an "image problem," though not one they necessarily created themselves.

In *Through a Lens Darkly: How the News Media Perceive and Portray Evangelicals* (Clements Publishing), David Haskell, professor of journalism at Wilfred Laurier University, asserts that the Canadian population in general, and journalists especially, have a view of evangelicals that does not match reality. And the journalists keep retreading their erroneous view.

Haskell's book is the first Canadian analysis of how journalists' prejudices against evangelicals have distorted their reporting about evangelicals, resulting in the creation of that "image problem." Haskell himself is a Christian, but does not call himself an evangelical.

In an interview with the *National Post* he noted that part of the problem is that journalists and many other Canadians confuse "evangelical" and "fundamentalist," and, in fact, incorrectly use those terms interchangeably.

Haskell says evangelicals categorize themselves by four basic tenets: "a conversion experience; the importance of telling others about Jesus; putting the death and resurrection of Christ at the centre of faith; a high view of Scripture."

In contrast, mainline Protestants focus on "the teaching and ethics of Christ," says Haskell, and fundamentalists "really do take the Bible literally and tend to be more withdrawn from the mainstream culture as a whole."

Truth is intolerant?

Theology doesn't matter to most journalists. They see evangelicals as "arrogantly self-righteous and intolerant and generally negative. And they find [evangelicals] especially intolerant when it comes to things like homosexual rights," Haskell told the *Post*. But, he notes, how one defines "intolerance" is what leads to "a sticky situation."

One journalist Haskell talked with defined that "intolerance" as evangelicals thinking they're the only ones who are right, a view "incomprehensible" to that journalist. However, Haskell points, "The Evangelical would say that tolerance means not to agree with the other's position, not to say it's equally valid, but to say others have the right to say they hold the only truth, as well – but we will agree to disagree."

Evangelicals are also singled out because they tend to be more outspoken about their faith than mainline Protestants or most Catholics, and they actively "proselytize." That often puts them in the spotlight, says Haskell.

He also notes that there is a snobbishness in regards to evangelicals by many non-evangelicals because historically evangelicals have downplayed education, and also the need for pastors to be educated. There was "a rejection of an intellectual tradition." That has changed, Haskell notes. But the general Canadian image of evangelicals "is a hold-over from years ago."

Dr. Brian Stiller, President of Tyndale College in Toronto says, "Religious bias and implicit put-downs are too often seen as good journalism. Haskell's focused lens allows no fuzzy edges. A great read. An important book for both journalists and people of faith."



Church

Native Canadians get papal apology for abuse

ROME (Ekklesia) – Early this month Pope Benedict XVI has met privately with a delegation of native Canadians to express his sorrow for the abuse suffered by indigenous children in Canadian residential schools.

The delegation, which included Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine, former students of residential schools and elders, came to the Vatican at the Pope's invitation. The Canadian group also included Archbishop V. James Weisgerber, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and representatives from several Catholic dioceses and religious communities.

"Given the sufferings that some indigenous children experienced in the Canadian residential school system, the Holy Father expressed his sorrow at the anguish caused by the deplorable conduct of some members of the church and he offered his sympathy and prayerful solidarity," a statement from the Vatican said.

"His Holiness emphasized that acts of abuse cannot be tolerated in society. He prayed that all those affected would experience healing and encouraged First Nations Peoples to continue to move forward with renewed hope," the statement added.

Closing the book

Critics and the media insisted that the statement was not actually an "apology." However, Fontaine, who was himself a student in a residential school and has spoken out about the abuse he suffered, told CBC's "The National" that he hoped the Pope's expression of regret would "close the book" on the issue of apologies for residential school survivors.

"The fact that the word 'apology' was not used does not diminish this moment in any way," Fontaine said. "This experience gives me great comfort."



According to a statement from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the native representatives were all former students of residential schools: Peter Kelly, an elder; Edward John, grand chief of the Ti'azt'en Nation, B.C.; Delia Opekokew, a Cree lawyer; and Kathleen Mahoney, a professor of law and negotiator of the Indian Residential Schools settlement.

Survey tracks changes in the CRC

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The results of the 2007 150th Anniversary survey by the Christian Reformed Church in North America reveal declines in denominational loyalty and devotional practices, especially among younger members, though overall church attendance has remained steady and the number of college-educated church members is on the rise.

The survey is the most recent in a series conducted every five years since 1987 by researchers at the Center for Social Research (CSR) at Calvin College. Survey authors randomly selected 120 churches to participate and asked those congregations to have their members respond to the online survey.

"There are trends in demography and religious practice that are not very encouraging here," says Neal Carlson, assistant director of the CSR. At the same time, he said, researchers were heartened by responses that can help church leaders as they work to identify, establish and support healthy churches.

The older, the more loyal

Survey respondents were asked how they would describe their loyalty to the Christian Reformed Church. Answers revealed that the older the respondent, the more loyal he or she is: 71 per cent of "pre-boomers" (age 62+) described themselves as "very loyal," compared with 51 per cent of "boomers" (age 42-61), 38 per cent of "post-boomers" (age 25-41) and only 31 per cent of "millennials" (under 25).

For the first time, says Carlson, the survey asked questions



Romanian church ministers to Filipino women

BUCHAREST, Romania (MNN) – "Even though we think of the Great Commission as going somewhere far away – 'go and make disciples of all nations' – it does not negate our need to go across the street or next door or down the block."

So said Bev Charles, who has been working with Greater Europe Mission (GEM) in Romania since 1994 with the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program. Charles also helps with a program for orphan girls, sharing the love of Christ with them. Earlier this spring, some new arrivals created excitement in the program.

"In late spring of last year, there were 95 Filipino ladies who came to Romania to work in a clothing factory," says Charles. When they moved in across the street from Charles' apartment, the GEM missionaries in the area began to pray. The Filipino women did not speak any Romanian at first, but they did speak English, providing missionaries the opportunity

to reach out to them.

As the Romanians began to invite the women to their homes and to church, the local church began to follow. "The Romanians in the Baptist church there began to reach out to these ladies," says Charles. "They started to invite them home for dinner after church and take food and clothing to them. Then we began to do a Bible study with some of these ladies in my apartment."

After awhile, this outreach yielded fruit. "One of them had come to know the Lord, and a couple of them had re-dedicated their lives to Christ," says Charles. Most of the women have since returned to the Philippines, but those that remain in Romania are still attending the local church.

The unexpected quality of the experience has caused GEM to open their eyes for similar opportunities. Charles says they never expected to be working with Filipinos in Romania, but the Romanian church was able to reach out without leaving the country. Concerning the Great Commission, Charles says, "When God gives us opportunities, we need to be ready to reach out."

U.S. panel: Nigeria among worst violators of religious freedom

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Christian News Today) – The annual report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (CIRF) has designated Nigeria as a country of particular concern for "tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of freedom of religion."

Nigeria has been plagued by religious violence since 1999 when *sharia* law was introduced in the northern part of the country. Since then, the Christian minority in northern Nigeria has been more severely persecuted by Islamic extremists. Muslim radicals have been killing Christians, burning down churches, and forcing Christians to flee their homes.

Authorities in Nigeria have failed to stem this violence. The report by the commission expressed concern that "years of inaction by Nigeria's federal, state and local governments has created a climate of impunity, resulting in thousands of deaths."

The report indicates the role of countries such as Libya, Saudi Arabia and Sudan in fueling the violence by building mosques and Islamic religious schools in which an extreme version of Islam is preached. The report noted, "An increasing number of Nigerian Islamic scholars and clerics are being trained in Saudi Arabia and return with a politico-religious ideology that explicitly promotes hatred of, and violence against, non-Muslims."

CIRF's conclusion is: "Put simply, the Nigerian government has permitted religious violence and other severe violations of the freedom of religion to occur with impunity."

International Christian Concern, a Washington D.C.-based human rights organization that exists to help persecuted Christians worldwide, has been calling for an end to the impunity that radical Muslims possess in Nigeria. In its latest press release on Nigeria, ICC called for the establishment of an independent commission to investigate a recent attack in the northern state of Bauchi.

ICC reiterates its call for the formation of an independent investigative body to examine the root causes of the violence in northern Nigerian, bring the perpetrators of religious attacks to justice, and create a national dialogue for reconciliation and peaceful existence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

ICC's regional manager for Africa and the Middle East, Jonathan Racho, said, "It behooves Nigeria to act aggressively to protect Christian minorities in the northern part of the country. It is high time for Nigeria to bring the perpetrators of religious violence to justice. The lack of political will to proactively protect Christians from persecution and prosecute the perpetrators of attacks against them could result in large scale violence and create a national security crisis."

of individual church members about the factors – good and bad, healthy and not so healthy – that make up their own congregation. As a result, the survey found, for instance, strong support for updated modes of spiritual learning as well as an emphasis on the need to bolster one's personal spiritual health.

CSR staff and students designed and fielded the survey in collaboration with Rodger Rice, former director of CSR. The design team also included representatives of several denominational agencies, and drew heavily on the CRC's Healthy Congregation Initiative for survey questions.

In a recent presentation of the preliminary findings to the denominational board of trustees, researchers said the study found that the membership of the CRC continues to age, more households have fewer or no children, a declining proportion of children are attending Christian schools, evening attendance at services is dropping, but real household income of church members rose slightly. These findings reflect trends that have been observed over the last 15 to 20 years.

Seizing opportunities

While the big picture may look disturbing, there are signs that the church understands the demographic and spiritual challenges and has started to move "its response to deal with the old patterns," says Carlson. "The trends confirm that we need to act, and the [CRC's] focus on Healthy Congregations shows that we are acting," says Carlson. "The church sees that there

are opportunities and is starting to take advantage of them."

Five keys to healthy congregations

Although the results are not finalized, researchers came up with five keys to what respondents say make for healthier congregations. These are congregations that emphasize spiritual development, stewardship education and leadership training, that intentionally work at faith formation and stay close to members so they can understand their spiritual and other needs.

Some of the anonymous comments contained in the survey reflect what people see as adding to the health of their congregation.

Michael Bruinooge, who is helping in the effort to sustain healthy congregations, says the survey included questions that his office suggested. For example, respondents were asked how true certain statements would be for their congregation, such as:

- * *When people join our church, there is a clear expectation that they will engage in a lifelong process of following Jesus.*
- * *Our church encourages the spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, silence and solitude.*
- * *Our church provides a variety of small groups to foster community and accountability.*

Bruinooge says that the survey results will help in formation of programs and initiatives to help foster and support healthy congregations. Carlson notes that a report on the survey will likely be finalized and presented to the church late this summer.

Community

The House of Hese: God's mercy to the hurting of Winnipeg

Brett Alan Dewing

Sitting across from me, a healthy mid-thirties man of perhaps western Asian descent cradles his adorable two-month-old pot-bellied pig, Bill, as it dozes peacefully. On the other side of the table, a pretty nineteen-year-old refugee from Congo smiles widely at the sleeping animal. A couple of middle-aged blonde women wander through toward the kitchen, where two or three other women laugh and chat as they cook themselves some lunch. In the hallway, a tall man with beautiful mocha skin stoops to pet a mild-mannered dog named Grace.

As I type this, I realize that it is as beautiful a picture of heaven as I have heard. It is also the scene at downtown Winnipeg's House of Hese (Hebrew for mercy) during the day of my highly enjoyable visit. No one is related, and yet a true sense of family permeates the home, and I feel instantly drawn into it. I find myself wishing that I had such an atmosphere in which to conduct my daily life.

Between laughs, hugs and stories, I realize that this is in no way the hospice that many outside the walls have described. Despite that fact that a beloved resident has unexpectedly died in the last week, this house is full of joy and love and far removed from death. This is a house for those living with HIV/AIDS, and when I say living, I mean *living* – more fully than most people I know.

A safe place

Bill's owner makes it clear that though many refer to Hese as a hospice, it is a transition house focused on loving its residents into full integration with the world outside its doors. He is living proof, having moved into his own apartment after leaving the house a couple of weeks ago. He is back for a visit with his old friends (and, let's be honest, to show off his illogically cute pet), and I am lucky enough to chat with him about what Hese has meant to him.

After being diagnosed with HIV over a decade ago, life has been a challenge for him. Only recently did he feel confident enough to tell his loving family about the virus, having hidden his illness from them through suicide attempts and caring for his dying father. The true toll of his HIV has clearly been the secrecy and fear more than any of the terrible physical symptoms.

Living with the kind of secret that makes you afraid to tell those closest to you only exacerbates the inherent fear of living with a deadly disease. When he was last hospitalized, doctors tried every drug available to turn around his deteriorating health. With little to show for the strain of this treatment, he finally found out about the House of Hese and moved in shortly thereafter. Within three days, he was back to his old self.

What made the difference? Two things:



Brett and a resident of House of Hese

the safety of knowing he was cared for and understood in a world that is still afraid and confused about AIDS, and the spiritual element of care at Hese. A Christian (not a requirement for joining the Hese community), he found the one thing his care at the hospital had lacked in a staff of believers who offered to pray with him and travel with him to church.

Today, he is a healthy, glowing man who speaks on behalf of Hese and AIDS awareness at any gathering that will have him. Not only that, but he has dreams for his former home. He believes that God is calling them to purchase a next-door apartment building for those like himself who desire independent living arrangements and practical assistance in reengaging an ignorant world. Is such an acquisition realistic for a non-profit, Christian organization that prays week-to-week that they can pay their staff? Judging from how the first building came to be, we might all be surprised.

Moe's vision

In 1992, a Winnipeg woman named Moe watched as her friend died peacefully of AIDS, surrounded by friends and family. Four years later, while volunteering with AIDS services, she witnessed first-hand the reality that her friend was in a privileged minority. The more common stories of those dying from AIDS involved homelessness, empty hospital bedsides and a crushing loneliness and despair. These are the stories that stirred her heart.

In 1997, Moe attended the Fragrance of Justice conference and came home with a heavy and pregnant spirit. She stayed home for the next two days, praying earnestly for direction in the ache she felt for those with HIV/AIDS. And, as always, God did not disappoint.

Moe and a friend from her volunteer service went out into the community they had gotten to know through their work with those with AIDS. They asked doctors, patients, friends and those with the disease what needs and concerns they could address in Winnipeg.

What they found was the need for a place of transitional care that would not prove a drain on what government assistance was already available. There is little funding for

AIDS care (each Hese resident receives \$702 from the government for monthly rent and food, and those covered by disability or EI have their medications paid for in Manitoba – a cost that can easily reach \$4000 a month), with most funds going toward the crucial research of the disease. This meant that financial assistance and independence would be the first necessities of any service they might start.

Not knowing how to start, but following God's leading, Moe and

her friend held an evening gathering of about eight people to share their vision for what would become House of Hese. The next day, they were given a cheque for the price of a building.

Three obstacles

I had the pleasure of speaking with one of the ten people living at House of Hese. This man entered the house in bad shape, confined to a wheelchair and deteriorating. After six months, he was able to leave his wheelchair behind, and now he is hopeful for the future.

Such hope can be hard to find when you're living with a terminal illness, but he knows that through God's faithfulness – and the faithfulness of God's people – he can rise above his HIV and even one day be healed.

Each of my discussions (with Moe, this resident, and the man who has since moved out on his own) led to one constant. All three wished to help correct some of the misconceptions and lies that they have found alive and well in Christians and non-Christians alike.

One of these errors is the ignorance of how HIV/AIDS is spread. You cannot get HIV from physical contact (a hug, a handshake) or proximity. The only way that you can contract the disease is through fluid contact (blood or sexual intercourse).

That being said, the second obstacle those at Hese face is the assumption of how they contracted HIV. Men are automatically assumed to be gay, and women can be pigeonholed as sex workers. All are often accused of using illicit drugs. The truth is that anyone, from any walk of life, can contract HIV through something as simple as a blood transfusion or being born to an infected mother. Those who have lived at Hese have ranged from business heads to those down on their luck. And they are never asked how they contracted the disease.

The sad truth is that for many, especially Christians, there is a half-conscious belief that those with AIDS deserve their fate. The obvious truth is that no one deserves to die in pain and loneliness, no matter what their lifestyle may have involved.

Finally, a third misconception gets in the way of Hese's ability to find funds

and volunteers. For most of us in today's world, AIDS is seen as an African problem. We are all too eager to send assistance overseas while ignoring those in our own neighbourhoods. In truth, AIDS is likely a reality to some in your very congregation, though the stigma that still surrounds it keeps them from speaking up.

Is it that we feel better helping the poor in Africa or that we never have to see them face-to-face? The irony is that even for those who are only looking to feel better about themselves through their giving, the best way is by meeting the recipients of their aid.

What can we do?

Though numerous churches across the country have invited Moe and her staff to speak to their congregations, few actually offer their money or resources to those in need. Even from those who subscribe to Hese's newsletter, less than half support the ministry of the house in any way other than much-appreciated prayer.

Perhaps many feel that the need is too great for their small incomes to make a difference. However, even \$5 a month from each church could make a huge impact. Every month, Hese's staff wait faithfully to see if the money for their overhead will somehow arrive. Their efforts could be much better used if they were free of the weight of fundraising and worry.

Those who truly have nothing to give financially can help out in even more important ways. Volunteers are always welcome, and many come away changed for the better and touched by God's hand. Food is a welcome donation, as is any household product. Some people knit or quilt for the residents. Others visit or offer entertainment or event tickets. There is always a wish list for the house of the most pressing needs, from big things such as furniture or renovations to small ones like a coffemaker.

If you are at a loss as to how you can help, give the house a call. They would love to have your encouragement and share their current needs. They can be reached in the following ways:

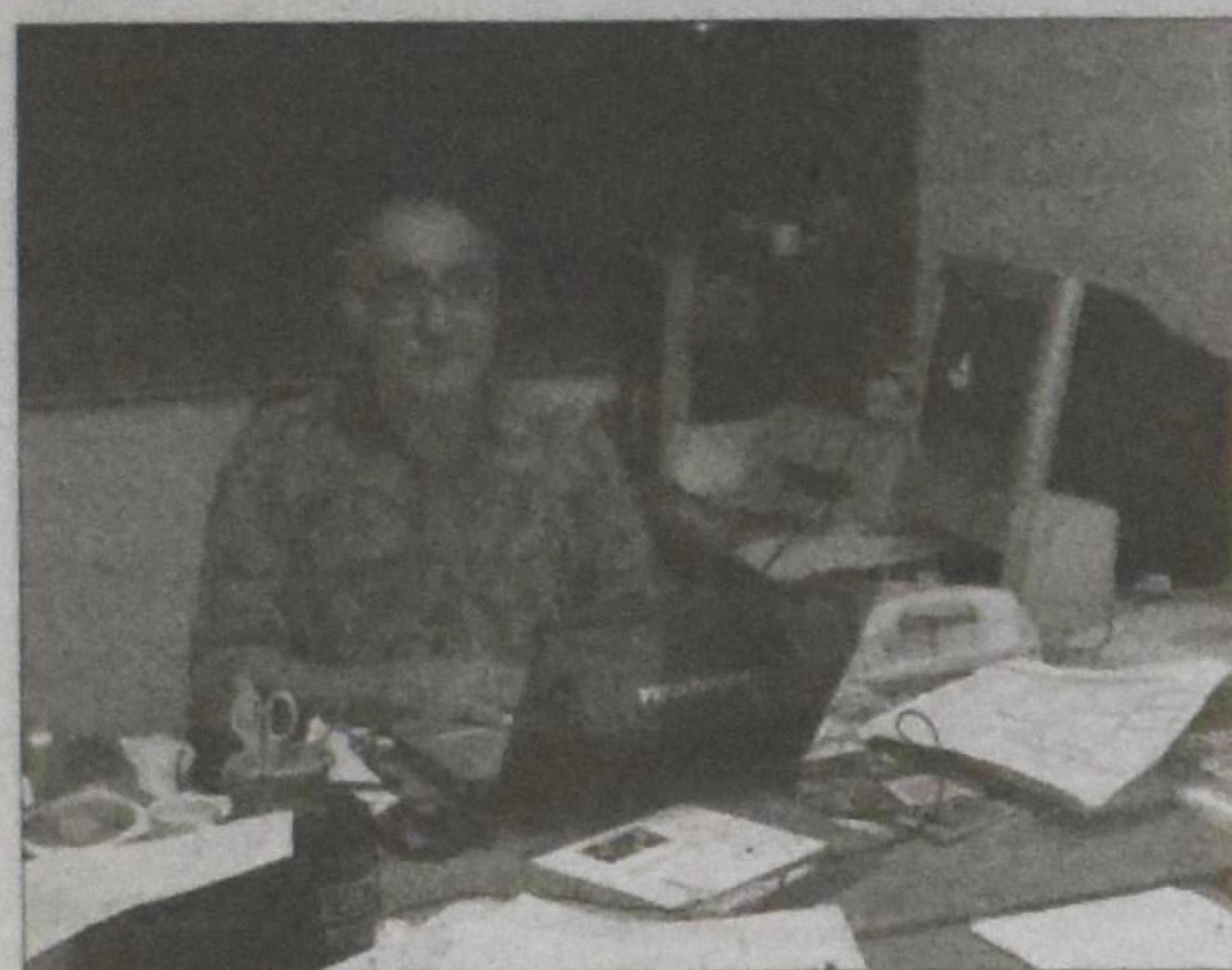
House of Hese
PO Box 2102 Stn. Main
Winnipeg MB R3C 3R4
phone: (204) 772-4793
fax: (204) 783-0494
e-mail: info@houseofhese.ca
web: HouseofHese.ca

There is much more I could write about my day at Hese, but I wager that if it were all set down, the newspapers of the world could not hold it all. Instead, I offer this small glimpse of something precious and vulnerable that needs our care, like a tiny piglet sleeping in loving arms.

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Interview

Combating torture in the age of fear



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Dr. Ezat Mossallanejad is Policy Analyst and Researcher at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) in Toronto and author of *Torture in the Age of Fear*. His is a story of excruciating suffering, immense courage, compelling compassion, and determined service. *Christian Courier* interviewed him by e-mail to learn more about his life and the important work that he does.

Tell us about your back-ground in Iran and how you came to Canada. Why were you persecuted? How did you escape? How have you coped with being persecuted?

I have escaped tyranny and persecution three times in my life, and I am a victim and survivor of torture, having spent four years in jail in Iran because of my human rights activities. I came to Canada as a political refugee on February 12, 1985. Devastated by my past and living as a refugee in Canada, I experienced both tremendous hardship and unbelievable grass-roots generosity. I chose to work for and with refugees and traumatized people as a way of creating meaning in my life.

I was a human rights activist during the late 1960s and early 1970s under the Shah of Iran. In those days there was a notorious secret police organization called SAVAK. Very little dissent was tolerated, even from the moderate reformists. On a beautiful April day in 1973, two men wearing civilian clothes entered my office. At that time, I was working as the Deputy General Manager of Organization, Education, and Methods in the Ministry of Water and Power. They handcuffed me from behind, blindfolded me, and took me away to the notorious Evin prison. They tied me to a metal bed, spread-eagled, and a large, burly man, who looked like a gorilla, began beating me with a wooden stick. Over the next several hours, I was beaten with a variety of instruments on the soles of my feet.

At some point, they took me back to my house and searched it in front of me. After, I was taken back to jail. They blindfolded me again and ordered me to stand facing the wall in front of the torture chamber. I could hear the sound of lashes followed by torturers' shouting and insults mixed with the pleading, weeping, and screaming

of the victims. When my turn came, they intensified my torture. It was so difficult to stand the pain. With every blow I felt an intolerable pain running through my body. The beating continued until the middle of the night when two soldiers threw me into a small cell.

In the morning, all four pillows on which I had rested my legs were stained with blood. Since I was unable to walk, one of the guards carried me to the prison doctor. When the doctor unwrapped the bandages from my legs, I saw that strips of flesh were hanging off the bottoms of my feet. In order to prevent gangrene, he trimmed the flesh off my soles without anesthesia. Both of my legs, especially the left one, were completely black right up to the knees. I passed blood instead of urine for twenty-four hours. For one week, I could not walk at all. A guard had to carry me to the bathroom in his arms. For fifty days, I walked with great difficulty. Over the next four years, I spent time in many prisons and was beaten on numerous occasions, but I was never tortured as badly as that first time.

In time, I learned that they had arrested me because of someone's false confession under torture. For four years, I lived in constant fear that one of my former associates would be arrested and would give my name under torture, which would cause SAVAK to make new attempts at extracting information from me. I remain proud to this day that, while I gave them bits and pieces of information about myself in order to get them to leave me alone, I never incriminated anyone and no person was arrested because of me.

My troubles did not end with my release. I felt as if I had been transferred from the small prison of a cell to the larger prison of a police state. A shadow was following me everywhere. I escaped to India, where I registered for a Ph.D. program. It wasn't until after the Shah was overthrown that I returned to Iran.

The society I found when I went home was worse than the one I had left behind. The religious fanatics had by that point gained a near monopoly on political power. They did not believe in the democratic process. I suddenly found myself persecuted by my former friends from prison who now occupied important positions in government. Often I had to change locations four or five times each day to evade capture. Once I spent a night hiding out on a battlefield with bullets flying all around.

Life was impossible in such circumstances. I fled Iran again, this time seeking refuge in Turkey. Life was not easy in Turkey either, particularly for an alien with no residence permit. Soon I left Turkey and sought refuge in various European countries, eventually returning to India, where I continued my studies. The situation in India was far from stable, however. I discovered that the Iranian *Hezbollah* had organized in the country and were busy persecuting political refugees

such as myself. Many of my friends were beaten and two were killed when they were attacked by an angry mob. I had to escape to Canada. We arrived in Montreal on February 12, 1985.

Throughout my life, when I felt most hopeless and desperate, several things helped to sustain me and give me hope. First among these is regular exercise. The second coping mechanism that I found useful was that of task setting. When I set a task for myself, it allowed me not to think about my surroundings and not to worry about the future. The third one is recognizing the importance of a unity with nature. I also learned that aesthetic appreciation is another way of discovering some goodness in our surroundings. Humor, music, song, work and physical activity helped me survive in prison and afterwards. But, the most important thing that helped me to survive was love. Love provides you with a generous gift that can heal most wounds.

What does your role as Policy Analyst and Researcher at the CCVT entail?

My main responsibility is contributing toward the formation of an organized, coherent, and effective human rights movement in Canada for survivors of torture through public education, advocacy, and research. It entails networking with nongovernmental organizations and the government, as well as the intergovernmental bodies. I monitor the implementation of the government refugee/immigration laws and policies, as well as national and international legal instruments for protection of torture survivors. I do my best to discover all sources of information on torture, refugees, and non-citizens in limbo.

Another component of my job is the critical analysis of the government's policies and actions on refugees and survivors of torture. I write reports, articles, and coordinate the overall publication of the CCVT journal, *The First Light*.

As a public educator, I am involved in running workshops, lectures, and seminars on issues related to torture, trauma, family separation, the agony of living in limbo, protection of refugees and torture survivors, prevention of torture and degrading treatments. I am a member of the International, Legal and Public Education committees of the CCVT.

What services does the CCVT provide?

Working with the community, the CCVT supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, advocates for their protection, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT's mandate is to provide its clients with "hope after the horror."

Since its inception in 1977, the CCVT has provided services to more than 16,000

survivors of torture, war and generalized violence from 136 countries. It offers survivors and their families such services as the Volunteer Befriending Program, Mutual Support Groups, Art Therapy, a children's program, a drop-in counseling program, and English as a Second Language classes. It also offers Coordinated Professional Services, including specialized medical and legal support. These programs are currently being enhanced by the assistance of more than 250 volunteers, most of whom act as personal befrienders to survivors of torture. The CCVT also conducts an extensive public education program to teach service providers and the general community about torture, its effects, and ways to provide an appropriate response.

How have people's lives been changed by the help they received at the CCVT?

In my experience, cultivating a general passion for life can be extremely helpful in recovering from trauma. Sometimes it seems as if we are living in a heartless world and in a spiritless situation. It is important for survivors of torture and war to create an atmosphere of love, sympathy, and support among themselves. During the years of working with the CCVT, I have frequently observed the effectiveness of our mutual support groups organized for our clients in their own native languages. It is important that uprooted survivors of torture and war feel at home in Canada. We do this through our various programs including matching clients with volunteer befrienders from the mainstream culture. Once, for example, we matched a client suffering from aftereffects of torture with a Canadian befriender who was a poet. This helped our client to overcome his trauma, to learn English, and to start composing poetry.

What are the rewards and challenges of your job?

I am pleased with my present job, and I am a living witness to the positive impact of the CCVT programs. These programs have proved to be effective in bringing meaning to the lives of both the CCVT clients and its volunteers.

There are two main challenges in my job. First, policy developments are beyond our control. There are powerful forces and vested interests that make policies move in negative directions. Second, it's not easy to hear stories of torture on an ongoing basis and not get affected. To help victims, one has to own their problems. Owning multiple traumas can lead a professional to become burned out. I have overcome these challenges by working with clients, liaising with their communities, and celebrating our small victories.

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Community

KNOW STRANGER

Christ's compassion rests
In the shape of a tear
From the eye of a soldier
Embedded by fear
Tear-dropped streams of confusion
The soldier catches a glimpse
Of the strange-like stares
Full of careless pretense

COVERED... in heaviness
His brow lined with a frown
Not knowing to look up
He ONLY stares down
CLOSE to cement where
The surface is hard
Softness become tough
His protection to guard

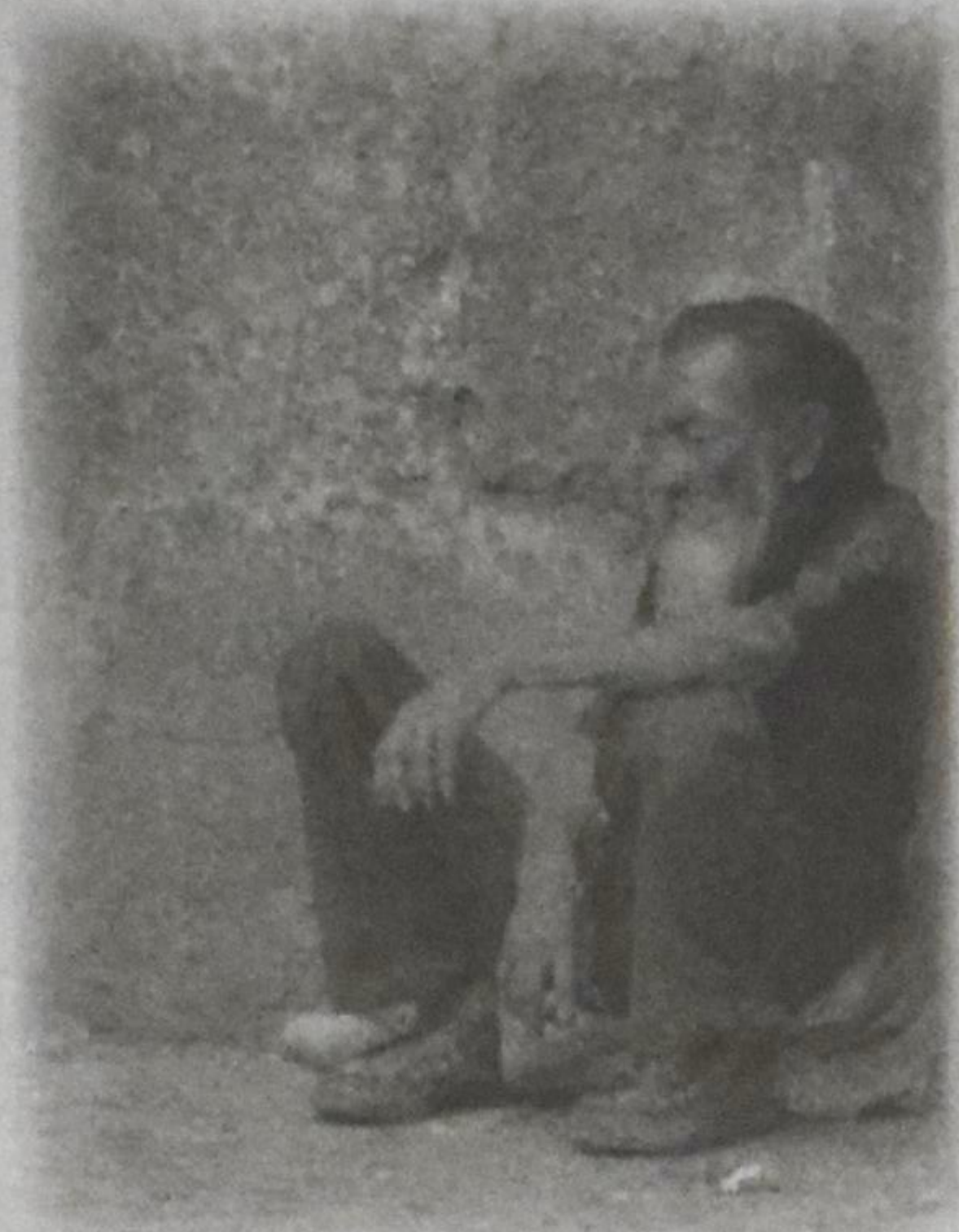
What's been STEPPED ON and
trampled
This place called his soul
The surface where spit lands
And hardens 'pon cold
It's why he wears a coat
In the summer time too
He can't feel the temperature
Beneath years of pain glued

Holding — together
Fractured fragments and pits
The memories so jagged
They break him to bits
Every time he remembers
What he tries to forget
We strangers remind him
With the jerk of our necks

As we say: "Don't sit near me!"
Born thief! Don't sit here
You're crazy! You scare me"
With a faked-polite sneer
All the while he is watching
FOR SOMEONE who has seen
THE SAVIOR who suffered
To make THIS MAN clean

THE ONE that they spit on
THE ONE who they beat
THE ONE who they lied on
As THEY WALKED down the street
Calling HIM names
That were not His own
STRIPPED of His clothing
Left suffering alone

Bloody-tear drops fell
From the brow of Christ's frown
HEAVINESS FULL WEIGHTED
By EACH THORN of crown
Trying hard to forget
The pain of man's sin
He kept His mind fixed
On the heavenly realm



With His HEAD HUNG down
He remembered the most
Why He came to Calvary
'Til He gave up the ghost
Resurrection morning
It is ALL brought to birth
As VICTORY of righteousness
OPENS the earth

THE SAVIOR HIMSELF
Risen and living
THE SON OF GOD
Purely fulfilling
The purpose He gave
To those who believe
HIS BLOOD BOUGHT salvation
Paid for... to save!

"THOSE...WHO SAY"
They are the children of God
Who know what it means
To be forgiven and called
The righteousness of Christ
NOT BECAUSE we deserve
Nor look clean nor dress right
But because WE HAVE HEARD IT

AND WHEN...silence creeps UP
In BETWEEN you...and him
THE ONE...YOU CALL "stranger"
And jeer...with your grin
Remember HE'S WAITING
AND LISTENING for sound
A NOISE...that will motion
HIS HEAD...from the ground

A WORD... that will cause
His eyes to rise
To open up
And see the skies
The limits God has
For his endless embrace

VISION CLOTHED... in righteousness
GARMENT PERFUMED...with
God's grace.



Paula is a poet, writer, lover of outcasts and wife of Kenny Warkentin.
They live in Winnipeg. One of her greatest passions, is to grow in the
art of dancing with words. Copyright © by Paula Warkentin

THE TRUTH IS NOT ENOUGH...
action is needed

*You must be the change you want to
see in the world.*

Mahatma Gandhi

I do not remember ever being interested in what would happen to me after death. I do not know why. Maybe because I have always been troubled by what I call "the reward and punishment equation" of our Christian faith — for instance, believing in Jesus will bring us the golden streets of heaven while rejecting him will land us in the fiery pit of hell. "This belief is fear driven," I often told a friend. And so, when I became a young adult, I struggled to commit to a faith whose bottom line seems to encourage its members to stay at an adolescent stage of spiritual and psychological development.

A larger and healthier worldview

Today our Christian worldview is much bigger than the above "equation." Now, I believe I am not the only one experiencing a lack of interest in scoring brownie points for life after death. In its place, and because modern technology has created a global village, many Christians are more than ever trying to make *this* world a better place for all people regardless of color and creed. The kinship and compassion we feel for one another's sufferings and sorrows transforms our self centered "I" into a collective "we." While we must not lose the personal responsibility and unique offerings of the "I," we have come to a time where we must equally embrace the collective responsibility and wisdom of the "we." In other words, we need to see beyond the differences we have with others and move towards a level of mutual understanding that leads to collective action benefiting the health and welfare of all.

The truth is not enough

And so, I have begun pushing the envelope by encouraging everyone I know to begin to *act* to save our planet. This is a huge task because there is usually a large gap between *believing* in something and committing to *act*. For this reason The State of the World Forum was established in 1995

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

with Mikhail Gorbachev as the convening chairman to create a global leadership network committed to transforming "conversations that matter" into "actions that make a difference." The 2009 Forum will take place from November 12th to the 14th in Washington, D.C. and will address the theme "The Real Crisis of Climate Change: Truth is Not Enough." The Forum will call on people and governments around the world to commit to a 10-year plan to green our economies. The focus of the forum is not to talk about the problem but on the *actions* (personally and collectively) needed to bring about the change we know must come.

Personally speaking, the complexity of shifting from an industrial society to one that engenders a life-sustaining civilization boggles my mind. Still, I could not resist chuckling when one of my children bought a "how to" book on developing a simple and self-sustaining lifestyle. But neither could I resist suggesting she chat with one of her aging grandparents as well. If ever there was a generation of "hands-on experts" in living this lifestyle it was the immigrants who courageously weathered the uncertainties of pioneering in a strange land.

For myself, I feel fortunate I had immigrant parents as role models. I learned to love mundane tasks like hanging out the wash in the brilliant summer or winter sun, remaking beds with clean, fresh smelling linens and even washing the dishes in warm soapy water by hand. Surprisingly, I discovered, by taking the time to do this ordinary work that has to be done over and over again, I became more attuned and respectful of the Creator of the cycles of growth in my life as well as the natural order of the universe. While I agree this all sounds rather mystical, it motivates me to take the necessary action to help create a healthier world.

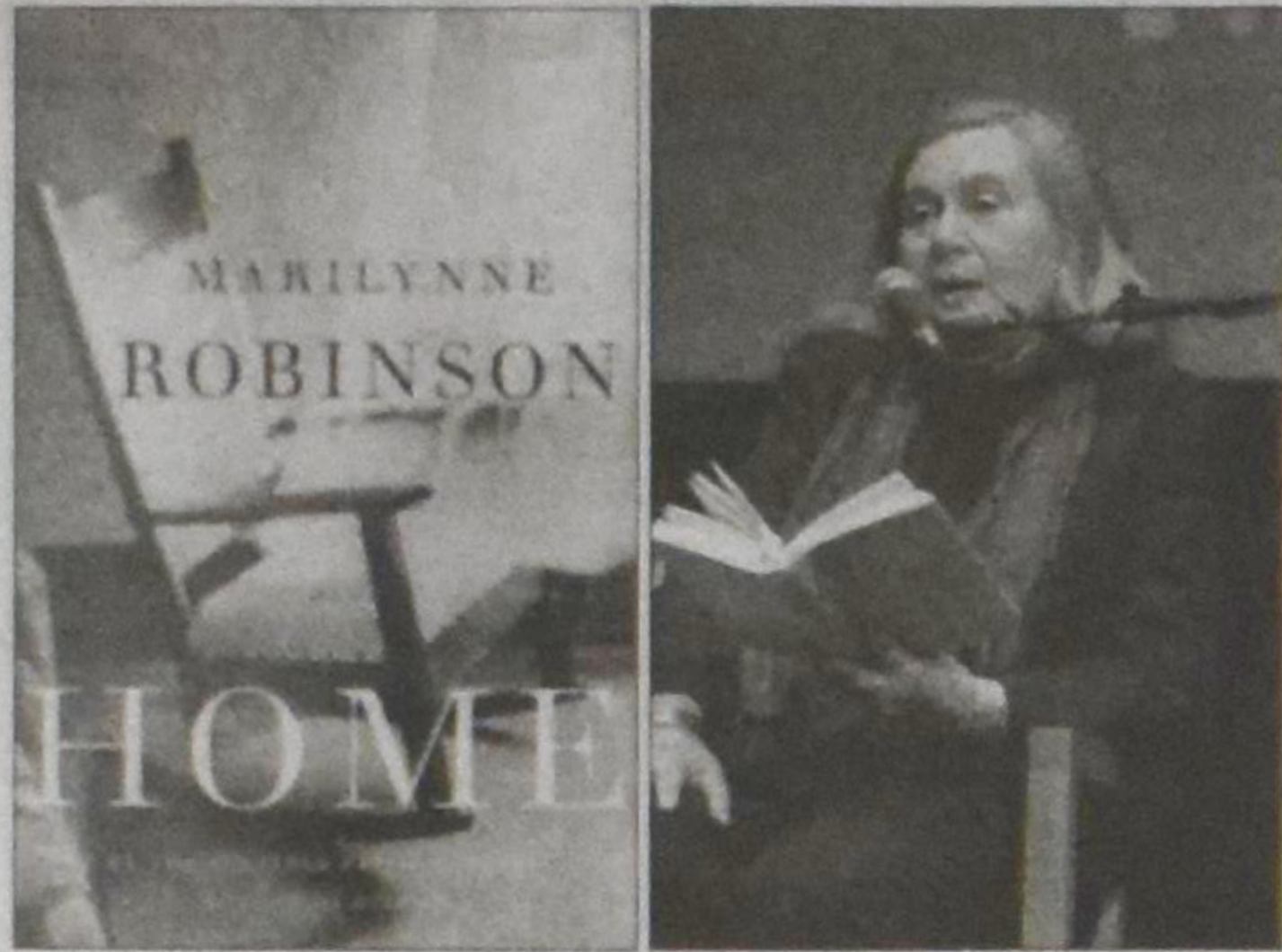
In fact, it does so much more so than fear.

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Review/Awareness

Home - a review



HOME by Marilynne Robinson, Harper Collins, 325 pp.

Reviewed by John Koole

Pulitzer Prize winner Marilynne Robinson has once again presented us with a warm, fascinating story set in a manse. At the end of her novel *Gilead*, a story told by the reverend John Ames, we learn that a son and daughter of Ames' friend, the reverend Robert Boughton, an ailing widower, have returned home to the little Iowa town of Gilead. In *Home* we learn why.

Son Jack was always a trouble to the Boughton family. A youthful thief, he eventually becomes a binge drinker and spends time in jail. After twenty years absence he joins his sister at home, seeking to come to terms with his past. Though he lovingly cares for his aged father, to the very end he remains beyond the reach of his kindly father's deep love, for every fatherly approach at reconciliation seems to build higher the walls of misunderstanding. Even Ames only begins to see some good in this namesake of his at the last moment, though Jack is naturally suspicious of him and everyone else and wonders whether God has made him reprobate.

Jack, however, lonely misfit in the family that he is, really has a deep affection for the old farmhouse/manse with its furniture "like something out of Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop*, its barn, the overgrown flowerbeds, and the huge oak in the front yard where the

seven children had their swings. Daughter Glory, who tells the story, has no affection for the old place at all, however. She has long dreamed of a quite different sort of a home. All her dreams, however, have been cruelly shattered. She is home to stay. One wonders at book's end whether the story has not been as much about her as about her mysterious brother Jack. Touchingly, left alone at the house, her father near death, she ends her tale at the old oak by declaring, "The Lord is wonderful."

Robinson quotes Scripture frequently. It seems Jack knows his Bible and his theology very well indeed. The author's grasp of the works of Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, John Knox and the like is abundantly evident. Her presentation of racial attitudes among middle class northerners in the States in the 1960's is painfully accurate, as is her hint that a church which deals daily in proclaiming love and forgiveness may come up short in matters of justice (the Boughton children, after playing in a field where a neighbour has planted his crops, are sent to *apologize* for damage done in spite of the fact that the field is Boughton property, their father having privately fretted for years over this neighbour's trespass).

The formality, the dress code, the Sabbath rest, the mealtime grace, the simplicity, the frugality, and the serious conversation of the Boughton home will strike readers not brought up in such a home as strange, but for many it will also bring a nostalgia for a time long past. *Home* is a book that unfolds slowly, the story told through reminiscences and conversations, but it is a novel filled with insight that many will want to read again and again.

John Koole b. 1935, Allendale, N.J., local schools, Calvin College & Seminary, doctoral with G. Berkhouwer, ordained CRC Cambridge 1970, Trenton Ont., Ingersoll Ont. retired 1995, living in Strathroy.

A tiger caged

Brett Alan Dewing

The image of the caged tiger holds immense and significant meaning for me. As with all the good ones, the story is a long one.

And, as with many, it begins with Annie Dillard. Dillard's masterpiece, *Holy the Firm*, includes a story of how her cat, Small, brings in a little god she has caught, dangling in her mouth like a mouse. When I was living alone on Highway 6 with my cat, Erius, I wrote a little take-off of this passage called "small" which became the first chapter of my book, *Mornings When I Wake*.

Still later, when I was at a Living Waters meeting, God consistently whispered to me the word "small". Now, before this, God had been a little less direct in his communications with me, so I was a bit confused. Throughout the night, though, the word

"small" kept popping into my thoughts with no context. I thought "this is a place where I can be small." What a blessing!

Later, in prayer, God showed me a picture of a tiny kitten being held in strong, masculine arms. As I meditated on it, I realized that I was the small vulnerable animal, and God was holding me in a gesture of both cherish and protection. Slowly, God showed me that I was also the arms – that I was myself strong and masculine (a lesson I still need to internalize), and that my manliness could be expressed through tenderness.

And then it happened. God once more whispered the word: small. And suddenly, it all came together. Yes, I was free to be small. Yes. But also. Also, I was Small. I was the cat. I had the ability to bring God to others in my mouth...my words. And, also, God was Small, holding me in his mouth both

It's a matter of noblesse oblige!

As a columnist writing as a liberal artist, I have been a bit of a disappointment. Of course, I care not about the opinion of my readership, nor do I respond to any sense of disappointment from the readership of a paper which has the incredible fortune to have me included in its roster of writers. No, concern about audience opinion is for minor figures: Homer or Plato, or Oprah for instance.

Rather, the disappointment hits so hard because it comes from the only place that matters: me. You see, I have surveyed my recent spat of articles and I have noticed a sore lack of gratuitous Latin phrases.

How can anyone make it into the *crème de la crème* of writers of the last millenia without following the basic *lex* of the writers' *mundi*? Did Descartes make it big because of his "I think"? No, it was all about the *Cogito*. And, honestly, do you think that anyone would ever pick up the "theological summary"? My sentiments exactly. A book with that title is more likely to be picked up for tinder. But, give it a Latin name and, presto change-o (are you impressed with my Latin yet?), you've got yourself the *Summa Theologica* – one of the top five books of thought of all time, and a bedrock of the church to boot. You put that together with a name like Aquinas and what you have is pure *aurum*!

So, to rectify my sense of disappointment in myself (and to replace myself on the pedestal on which I have sat for so long that people have asked if I were a *stylite*), I have decided to fill that *lacuna*.

Thus, you will find in my writing, from time-to-time, words that could very well have been written in English, but were written in Latin instead. No longer will this writer's humble *stylus* be restricted to the ever so common English language. Instead it will flow with the *lingua franca*



of the golden age of genius and *gloria*. The sole purpose of this, of course, is to demonstrate to you, my faithful but manifestly unimportant readers, the superiority of my intellect.

It's the Latin *qua* Latin which really makes it all worthwhile. After all, why would anyone bother to say "I'll see you after church, around 2:30" when you can say "I'll see you after church, *circa* 2:30"? See what a sense of gravitas the use of gratuitous Latin phrases brings to your style of speech? No longer will you be seen as just another member of your community, but you'll be seen as a patrician among plebs.

Not only that, but it will make you an even better Reformed Christian. The reformers could have said "by faith alone, by grace alone, and by scripture alone" but that would have been lame, and they knew it. Reformers of the time knew that when you're up against the Catholics, the vernacular just won't do. Instead, we can boast about the three "*solas*": *sola fides*, *sola gratia*, and *sola scriptura*. Now there's something to rally behind, right? And what about *semper reformanda*? Much more exciting than "always reforming." (Much more on this in a later column).

Hold on a second: my lovely wife is insisting that I stop this nonsense. She's insisting that I quit the keyboard right now and clean the dishes. But, she can't do that to me! I'm the pater familias. Veni, vidi, vici, right? Honey?

I'm sorry, I'll have to end it here. I have some dishes to do.

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fiercely and proudly, like a kitten and a mouse.

This was my first experience with such a literate and specific and talkative God. I was changed. From then on, in times of prayer, I would see the cat, growing, stalking through long grass. I was maturing.

Eventually, I moved to Taiwan. And there, where the image had even more resonance, God showed me the adult cat. It had grown into a tiger.

I was confused. I certainly did not feel like a tiger. And yet, how could I argue? The Chinese and Taiwanese hold tigers in a sort of reverence, and they are everywhere in art. Every time I saw a tiger in a painting or sculpture, I would stop and stare at it, try to connect with it, try to see myself in it. I never felt it.



When I returned from Taiwan, my life began the downward chaos that is only now beginning to dissipate. I had no home, no career, no sense of where I belonged or what I should be doing. During a long walk to figure these things out, God once again brought me to the tiger. It was chained.

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Corinthians

The many possibilities of the Creator and Redeemer



All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead.

1 Cor. 15:39 - 42a.

To make his apostolic preaching of the resurrection somewhat acceptable for a reasoning and imaginative person, Paul slides with skillful hand from one image into another. In the verses 35 - 38 he used the image of a seed that is sown in the earth and dies and then is raised as a new plant. That resurrection is an act of God who gives a body to that seed and a different one to every different seed.

This latter thought, namely that in the process of sowing and growing every seed receives its own distinct body, Paul now works out in a totally different image. This point is quite important to him.

On the one hand, Paul emphasizes this to make it palpable that there is, in general, a variety of bodies. And this idea serves to exemplify – and make more acceptable – the fact that there are also great differences between our present, natural body and the spiritual body at the time of the resurrection.

At the same time, however, Paul wants to express the thought that, just as the seed receives its own special body, so also every person who is sown in death will receive the unique body that suits her or him. Thus Paul wants to express both the difference between and the likeness to each other of the present and the future body.

Still, in this second image Paul places the greatest emphasis

on the difference. He says: God gives to every seed its own body. We must not think that in the whole order of Creation there would be only one kind of body. There is the flesh of mankind and then there is the flesh of animals which is quite different. And there is also a distinction between the flesh of birds and that of fish.

When Paul's thinking goes in this direction, he does not quickly stop. He switches to another contrast, namely the one of earthly and heavenly bodies. There, too, we find a great difference. The splendour of a heavenly body is quite different from an earthly one, i.e., if an earthly one can be said to have splendour at all. Yes, even among the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon and the stars there are marked differences.

Differences

How Paul has exactly imagined these facts is not quite certain. It is possible and, in my opinion, even quite likely that he means indeed that mankind's corporality, its bodiness, if you will, is made of a different substance than that of animals and that there are similar differences between earthly and heavenly bodies, between birds and fish, between the sun, the moon and the stars. It is even imaginable that he means to say that the splendour of these bodies is in their being made of a different *matter*.

Of course, at present we have a different opinion about that. We have chemically analyzed and subdivided matter into its various elements and further subdivided them into the smallest particles. Moreover, we find corroboration of these analyses in everything, in things, in plants, in animals and people and even in the heavenly bodies. That, of course, does not explain the enormous mysteries of vegetable life, of animal sensing and of human thinking. It is there that

we see the greatest differences. Chemically speaking, there is not all that much of a difference between a spoonful of sugar and the brain of a genius. Still that spoonful of sugar does not invent the theory of relativity, whereas Einstein's brain did do that. Add to that the thought that all life and thought have a material basis and that there is not an awful lot we know about the relationship between soul and body, then we are no longer so quick to smile at Paul's antique opinion that there are many kinds of bodies.

It is possible, though, that the apostle means something simpler, something more immediate. Perhaps he simply means that all that exists appears to us in thousands of forms and colours and splendours. In that case he is not talking so much about matter that differs in physical or chemical ways, but only about the different *appearances* it takes.

However, it really does not matter all that much how he understood this. He only uses these things as an image. Therefore, we have to search for the one point of comparison. There is no doubt that this is found in the *variety* of bodies.

In this, Paul sees the activity of God the Creator. The Lord is capable of creating riches and abundance, and he delights in it. In God's thought there is an immense ocean of possibilities. It is for certain that God has not been willing to realize *all* of his ideas. He made choices, and those he did realize. He could have made quite different things and could have made the things that he made quite differently. That is quite an interesting idea, but it is unavoidable if we do respect the riches of God's thinking and the freedom of his will.

A certain modesty

But what Paul exactly means here is this: If God has laid already in the order of Creation astounding numbers and variety, particularly in terms of *bodies*, why would we then make problems about how and with what kind of *body* he would raise us from the dead?

Of course, for us, in our present state, there is in this idea something unimaginable. Neither could we have possibly come up with all those plants and animals. Our thinking is too limited for real creating. But does that mean that the resurrected body is unimaginable for God as well? Paul is saying that we can, with a quiet and trusting heart and mind, leave that up to God. As creatures we must practise a certain modesty toward our Creator.

This means in the first place then that we very much are unable to imagine that resurrected body. For us there must be a reason for quietly laughing about the kind of bliss promised to us in Christ's resurrection.

But, secondly, this image clarifies for us *that* it is unimaginable and *why* this is so. It is reasonable that the Creator's heavenly bliss is beyond us. We must not ignore that reasonableness in the obscurity of our faith.

And then thirdly, in this obscurity, blindness and modesty of our faith we are focused on the immense riches and freedom of the Creator! We cannot fathom the "what" and the "how" of the things he still has in mind for us. But, squarely founded on the gospel, we know that there is something unimaginably beautiful in store. We can fantasize in all kinds of ways, but the main thing is that we are chuckling inside. And thus has begun, for us already now, the everlasting joy of God's kingdom of the resurrection. Just a bit.

Translated by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines, Ont.

Tigercontinued from p. 13

I must admit, I was not encouraged. The last thing I wanted was to be chained. I felt chained already. But I knew God better than to think that he was merely reflecting the state of my own thoughts. I puzzled over this chained tiger. I longed now to be the tiger, virile and dangerous and purposeful. But I did not want the chain. And yet I felt that the chain was supposed to be there. The chain was as empowering as the cat himself. And I couldn't make anything out of it.

When next the tiger came to me, he was caged. Now we begin to get to the point. Let me hurry to say, before I continue, that I *do* think the cage and the chains represent my imprisonment. I am without a doubt held captive by my fear and my cycles of sin. It is absolutely an obstacle to my moving in power. But, as I said before, this is God, and I had already learned through the kitten that He is never interested in an $a=b$ equation. With Him, a always equals b and 36 (and sometimes a lemur). I knew somehow that this cage was an important part of my identity at this moment. It was good. Somehow.

Fast forward another couple years. In Taiwan, as part of my attempt to understand the tiger, I had picked up an English translation of Borges's *Dreamtigers*. In this book, Borges traces an inner journey, through poetry, essay, story, myth, and journal. It was much like me and this kintiger. Finally, years after buying it, I actually read it. Cue another thunderclap.

In one of the short pieces that make up the book, Borges talks about a tiger in a zoo. He rages at his imprisonment. He cannot understand why he is fated to be in a cage. Every day, a man comes and stares at the tiger. I forget the details of the parable, but I believe that the tiger dies and asks God why he was trapped for half his life in a cage. God tells him that the man who would watch him was a poet named Dante and that, inspired by the tiger's state, he had written a beautiful image into his work. This image was of the caged tiger, and it would illuminate for centuries truths and beauties for mankind to ponder. The tiger was then overcome with thanks. He had been used by God to spread wisdom and light to men. His part was only to be where he was and be seen by Dante.

I knew then that this was my place as well. I am a caged tiger. I am a sign and a wonder. I am here for a purpose that may never become clear this side Jordan. I am here to be seen and to be used. I am an inspiration. And that, though I never knew it, is exactly what I want to be. I may never meet my Dante. Or I may meet him many times over the years. Or, as one friend suggested, I may be my own Dante. But I will strut and pace this cage, protected from outside dangers and my own desire to flee, in case he comes by, in case this is the day that my light is captured by a poet's mind.

Story

Beating a message of retreat

Daphne Simpkins

As the church was getting ready for its first annual all-members retreat, the ladies of the Berean Sunday school class did not sign up.

Even though there were yellow flyers posted all over the church (including the doors of the stalls in the Ladies' rooms) informing you of how to reserve a cabin at the retreat, the Berean ladies did not sign up.

The church newsletter heralded the benefits of the great opportunity for everyone to retreat together in a relaxed, safe environment, but still Mildred Budge and her veteran Berean church ladies took note only of the recent contributions to the memorial fund. They did not even discuss signing up for the churchwide retreat.

It wasn't because the cooking – at church called the food ministry – would have most likely fallen to them. And sure, their veteran shoulders would be sobbed upon by young wives who were still learning that their marriage vows meant surprise and sacrifice and not enough money; and the older women, for whom these types of challenges had come and mostly gone knew that listening was all they could visibly do. Although they would pray later – and that did help – there was a new problem that arose from those encounters: back in the routine of regular church life the young wives, who had told more about their personal lives than they were now comfortable with others knowing, began to duck and hide; and sometimes they did more than that. Sometimes the young wives who had talked too much to older women who knew how to keep a confidence would often slander or berate or tease or ignore altogether the older women they had, in a fit of weakness and need, sobbed upon.

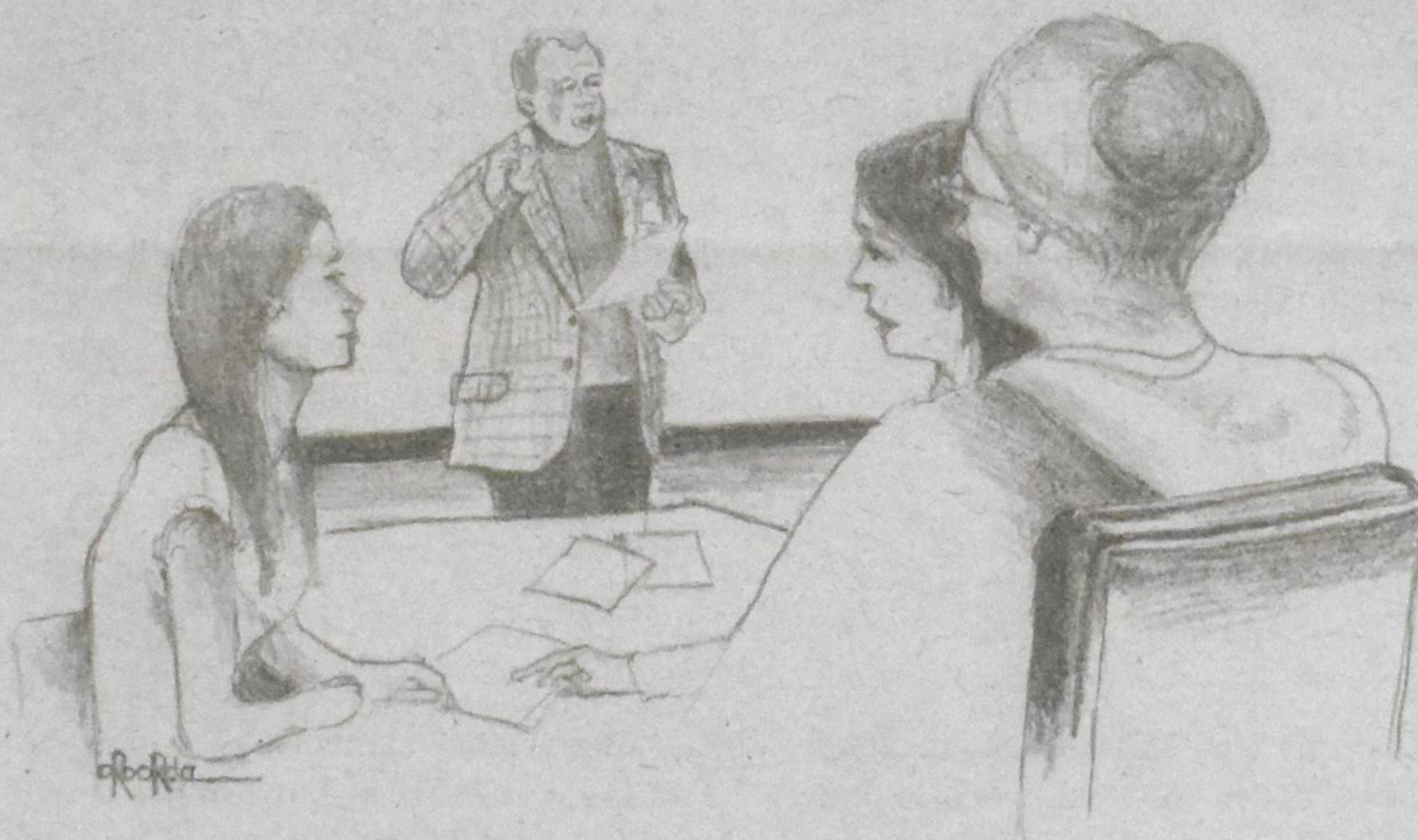
The Berean women knew all of that and would have forgiven the event if it occurred and if they had gotten offended in the first place. But they were never offended by the embarrassed, young wives. Such was the Berean ladies' love for the young women of the congregation that when the younger women used them or misused them, it was such an understandable human and common event that the Berean ladies did not even report their misuse to one another in search of a corroborating witness who would understand what had happened and take their side. They didn't have a side in those kinds of issues anymore: they loved Jesus who had died for them, and they had died to taking offense.

In this way, the Berean women of the church served the congregation in a quiet loving way that not many people understood. Actually, they were the only ones who understood it. And understood why they were not, as a group, going on a churchwide retreat.

But because the church leadership wanted

one hundred percent participation – if not everybody, then a representative from every class, surely – they sent an evangelist from the church's administration into the Berean Sunday school class. The Deacon appeared at the door Sunday morning at 9:45, his chin up, his blue eyes bright with zeal and the purpose to deliver the invitation once more.

All the women knew the new Deacon. Tommy was the grandson of one of their own, and they had loved him since his birth was announced by his grandmother Clovis 33 years ago. Many of the Berean ladies had taken turns teaching Tommy in various Sunday school classes when he had been a boy. Tommy had graduated from Mildred Budge's public school 5th grade class years ago. She had kept a special eye on him – proud of how he had turned out. And now Tommy was a deacon. As he entered



the room, Mildred exchanged a proud glance with his Clovis.

Tommy cleared his throat before speaking to the class of ladies who sat docilely before him, their legs crossed at the ankles because they could no longer cross them at the knees. "We want everyone to come to the retreat and get to know each other in a relaxed setting," Tommy announced vigorously. That was the heart of his message, and he had already delivered it.

When no one objected, his spine elongated, and Tommy spoke more slowly but quite as firmly, the way a new shepherd does who has his first formal assignment at church and is determined not to fail. Every woman in the classroom was rooting for him. Some prayed.

Throat cleared again, Tommy began, "Dining will be casual, like the dress. And there's plenty of nature and time for walks and meditation and prayer. And it will be a pleasing aroma in God's nostrils if you could all be there to praise the Lord with the rest of the congregation on this glorious churchwide retreat."

Mildred Budge smiled at Tommy and moved her hand in an upward pulsing movement, indicating that he should speak louder. When Tommy spoke again, the ladies in the back could hear him too. "If one or two of you will sign up, that might help the other women to find the courage to follow your example."

Tommy waited for a volunteer.

No women cleared their throats. They didn't look down either. They held his gaze and smiled: they were very proud of him. Tommy was doing a great job!

Mildred scanned the room, wondering who would speak up so that she would not have to be the one to do it, for she felt keenly that she had once been Tommy's teacher, and sometimes the authoritative role of former teacher undermined a young new deacon's self-confidence.

Fran, Millie's best friend, understood

"And she – like all of us," Fran continued, "was talked into going on a retreat like the one you are planning, and it was a place where there were nature walks, and this woman – younger than we are today – went for an early morning walk to meditate and pray and stumbled and fell down the hillside into a leafy ravine where she lay for several hours before someone missed her. That is the sad part of the story. No one missed Lucille for several hours."

"Bummer," Tommy commented, and stole a quick glance at his grandmother to see if he should say more. She offered him a discreet, priestlike shake of the head.

Tommy's gaze shifted back to Miss Fran, but now Miss Mildred, who recognized the direction of the truth that Fran had initiated, added, "Eventually, after breakfast, and after lunch, when we were going into the afternoon session, someone said, 'Where is Lucille?' This was the first time that one of us had noticed that Lucille was not with us and had not been for many hours."

"That long?" Tommy clarified, and he wondered if that could have happened to his grandmother, and a hint of a tear formed in his left eye.

Fran nodded seriously, picking up the thread of the story as she would have if she and Mildred had planned how to tell it. "We organized a search, and it wasn't hard to find her. Lucy had been calling for help, but no one else on the retreat had gone to walk through nature and pray and meditate on God's glory."

Mildred injected. "But all of us searched for her, and we found Lucille and called the paramedics. They came and took a stretcher down to where Lucille was. She was a heavy woman, and they had a difficult time bringing her back up the hillside, which was, if you can understand this, humiliating for her. Lucille left the church after that – I don't think from embarrassment but from having some justifiably hurt feelings –"

"No one noticed she was missing until after lunch," Tommy concluded soberly, looking around the room at the number of women who felt that if she had been the one to fall, would she have been left alone? Calling for help? And no one hearing her or missing her for hours?

"There are very few things in my life that have continued to cause me ongoing pain, but that does," Mildred added as curled, well-sprayed, grey Berean heads around the room nodded gently. For the women were steeped in the tradition of silence and repentance, and though they knew the gift of forgiveness and grace, they retained a righteous sorrow about what had happened to Lucille.

"Poor woman, I don't know what would be worse – falling down a hill like that – or being brought back up on a stretcher slowly because you're heavy..." Tommy mused, and his grandmother wanted to reach out

Continued on p. 16

Mildred's concern and tried to explain the class's position to Tommy. "Some time ago there was a retreat, and all of us went. All of us," she added for emphasis.

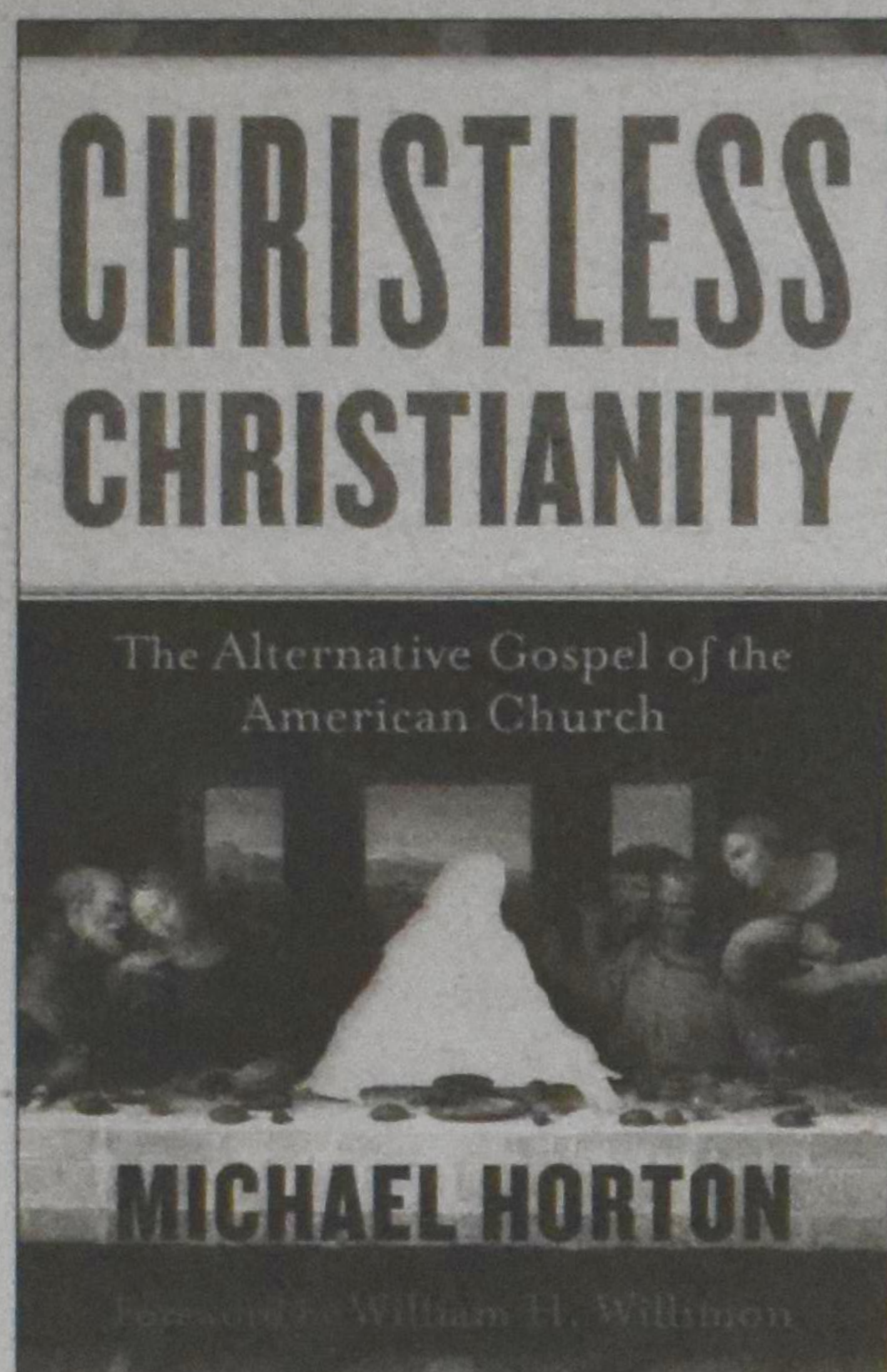
To his credit Tommy nodded, listening – and his mind did not dart ahead, preparing an argument to convince Miss Fran that whatever she was saying was simply an obstacle for him to overcome.

The room relaxed. Idle thoughts occurred: perhaps they could simply tell the young man the whole truth. They waited, though, skilled in silence, and let Fran do their talking for them, initially.

"There was in our midst a woman" Fran continued.

Tommy nodded discreetly, growing taller and serenely priestlike. His grandmother registered the transformation and wished she had a camera, for Clovis had pictures of her grandson at various stages of his growing up, but never this, never this priestlike composure. Tears filled her eyes, and she fought them as much as she did saying the words out loud, "There's my boy up there. My daughter's oldest. My heart's darling!"

Review



Book review

life movie rather than to be rewritten as new characters in God's drama of redemption."

From the outset Horton warns readers that, though they will find some good news in his book, much of what he has to say is not cheerful. In a sequel he hopes to address constructive ways for the church to remain faithful to the biblical gospel of salvation. Calling the American church, as well as himself, to account, Horton speaks not from a position of "antiseptic purity," but in humility, proclaiming with the prophet Isaiah, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Horton defines the American church's captivity as "moralistic, therapeutic deism," using a phrase coined by sociologist Christian Smith. Foundational to this belief is the assertion that people can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. Horton says, "Basically, the message is that God is nice and we are nice, so we should all be nice." This human-centered approach softens or denies the reality of sin, and views conversion as self-fulfillment. Horton clearly shows the unbiblical nature of such thinking, and says, "if reformation and repentance from our captivity to American religion is to really occur, there must be rediscovery of sin." Without such a rediscovery of radical sinfulness, people will not grasp the nature of God's radical grace.

Horton critiques proponents of the prosperity gospel, especially Joel Osteen – author of *Your Best Life Now: Seven Steps to Living at Your Full Potential* and *Become a Better You* – to show that "smooth talk and flattery" (Romans 16:17-18) is "part of the staple diet of successful American religion today." Such smooth talk trivializes sin by shifting "its focus from an offense against God with external consequences to an offense against oneself that keeps us from health, wealth, and happiness right now." Horton further expounds on his movie metaphor and says, that as a result of the beliefs of people such as Osteen, "When we try to fit God into our *life movie*, the plot is all wrong – and not just wrong but trivial. When we are pulled out of our own drama and cast as characters in his unfolding plot, we become part of the greatest story ever told."

Spelling out how the American church has turned the good news of the gospel into good advice, Horton says that "what we all need today is a fresh encounter with God's law in its full force." Then American Christians will understand that God's law is not a list of suggestions – advice on how to attain the good life – but it "is an expression of God's own glory – his moral character." Once the true nature of God's law is comprehended, the radical need for the gospel will also be understood. Christ's righteousness is the only way that the law can be fulfilled. His sacrifice is good news, indeed!

In the present climate, Horton calls Christians to a "discourse of resistance," which, he says, "concerns the recovery of Christian faith and practice within the church itself. It begins by challenging not only weak views of God, sin, and grace but the plausibility structures, paradigms, or worldviews that make biblical views increasingly incomprehensible even for most Christian laypeople and pastors. In the Christian discourse of resistance, God is the speaker. It is time to start listening to God's voice in Scripture again, taking our covenant Lord more seriously than we do ourselves and the wider secular audience that needs to be saved from its *self-talk*."

Inherent in Horton's critique of the American churches' spiritual condition is a call for the worldwide church to remain faithful to its biblical mission of proclaiming Christ, baptizing, teaching, gathering around the Lord's Table, and witnessing to the world.

Though the message of *Christless Christianity* is discouraging at times, Horton's wake-up call to the church is actually a hopeful call for renewal and a celebration of God's amazing grace and gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, ON. She recently published her first children's picture book, Monzi and Mama's Stories, copies of which can be ordered at sonyavf55@hotmail.com.

Review of *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* by Michael Horton (Baker Books, 2008)

Reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

The biblical witness of the American church is being silenced, even though many Americans claim to be Christians, asserts Michael Horton, Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California. The church, he says, is "so obsessed with being practical, relevant, helpful, successful, and perhaps even well-liked that it nearly mirrors the world itself." American Christians, he continues, want "to make God a supporting character in our own

Retreat...continued from p.15

and trace the shape of his face as she had when he was a boy, and move a lock of thick brown hair on his forehead. But that had stopped between them years ago – at least for him. In her mind, Tommy's grandmother often touched his face and moved that lock of unruly hair.

"It was a wake-up call," Fran added unexpectedly, and Mildred cast her an approving glance. "We don't go on retreats now – not as penance over Lucille. But because they are – if you will excuse me for saying so, Tommy dear – not right for us. Can you see that? So many of us use walkers and canes...."

Tommy thought about the number of women in front of him who might try to hike while praying and would most certainly fall down, and he agreed with them instantly. "I understand exactly what you are saying, and thank you for telling me about Poor Miss Lucille. But as the messenger, I wanted to make sure that you knew that you were all invited to come on this retreat."

"We know we're welcome. But we might fall down, Thomas," Anne Henry said, rising and moving toward the podium. It was time for the announcements to be finished so that they could study the Bible.

Tommy stepped to the side and explained,

"It was just, after your class initially declined to participate in the six-week workshop on peacemaking that was part of our campaign for churchwide unity, that perhaps a second chance at saying yes to this churchwide retreat might be a welcome opportunity for you."

"Oh, we enjoyed the six-week workshop on peacemaking," Anne Henry said, and the other ladies nodded their heads vigorously.

"One should be a peacemaker, no doubt about it," Fran interjected enthusiastically. "And Patrick did a most excellent job of telling us how to face conflict and resolve it...."

Tommy had a vague recollection of something Patrick had said after the second week of teaching the Bereans. "It's like going in there with two years of high school French and trying to teach French to native speakers who have served a lifetime as foreign diplomats."

"Ladies, thank you for hearing me out. If you change your mind..." Tommy added gallantly. He was feeling heady with the accomplishment of delivering his message and euphoric that it was over.

"A retreat is something for people who are too busy and have too much noise in their lives. We aren't too busy, and we're already

quiet," Anne Henry explained.

Tommy eyed Miss Anne with fresh interest, wondering what it would be like to live one's life as a retreat, so that special occasion retreats that cost \$87.00 a night would be redundant, but his to-do list beckoned. He had to report to the head man now that the ladies had said no to the retreat, but, the good news was he didn't think they were mad about anything and nobody's feathers were ruffled and needed to be smoothed.

Mildred Budge smiled and wondered what it would be like to tell a young man the whole truth instead of just part of the truth. She was a big believer in telling the truth, but in this instance there was quite a lot of it, and Tommy was young. He was old enough to understand about a woman falling down a hillside but perhaps not old enough to know the kinds of physical challenges that women their age lived with and the state of their sleeplessness and that when they did sleep, they often snored like lumberjacks.

A woman had her modesty. It was one thing to admit to falling down, but having the whole church know how loudly you snored and how often you had to find the common restroom in the middle of the night – well, that was more than any woman

wanted anyone outside their Sunday school class to know.

"Mildred, Thomas has turned out to be such a good boy," Anne Henry said after Tommy closed the door behind him. She adjusted the microphone in order to call for the prayer requests.

Mildred nodded, for she was accustomed to people complimenting her on various members of the church and the community simply because they had graduated from her 5th grade class years ago. "Tommy is sweet," Mildred agreed. "And brave, too," she added, nodding proudly to Tommy's grandmother. They exchanged congratulatory glances that their combined efforts had resulted in this boy, this deacon, this Tommy.

"Oh, it is brave of him to come here and talk to a bunch of women..." Anne Henry said, smiling. "Let's add the retreat to our prayers today. It will be good for so many people," she agreed peacefully.

Down the hallway, Tommy caught up with the man in charge who listened to his report from the Berean class, nodded with resignation, and said, "I guess we will have to line up some of the teenage girls to babysit then. Those Berean women just aren't team players."

Culture

Why so many Americans switch religions

A new Pew survey suggests that many Catholics leave their church because of doctrine, whereas Protestants tend to leave because of life changes such as marriage.

Jane Lampman

America is a country on the move in innumerable ways, and religion is no exception. Half of Americans have changed their religious denomination at least once in their lives – many several times – and 28 percent have switched faiths altogether (for example, from Christianity to Judaism). Amid this fluidity, the number of “unaffiliated” adults has grown to 16 percent of the population.

What is behind such extraordinary “churn” in US religious life? As a follow-up to its pathbreaking 2007 survey of the American religious landscape, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life released a new survey Monday – “Faith in Flux” – that explores in depth the patterns and reasons for such remarkable change.

Most people who switch their allegiance during their lifetime, the survey finds, leave their childhood faith while they are still young, before the age of 24. Yet the opportunities for attracting them to another religion appear to continue for some time.

The reasons for leaving differ according to the origin and destination of the convert. Roman Catholics, for instance, tend to leave because they don’t accept certain church teachings. Those Protestants who switch denominations do so more often in response to life changes such as relocation or marriage, or because of dislikes about institutions or practices.

While 56 percent of US adults remain in their childhood faith, 16 percent left, joined another house of worship at least once, and then returned to their original fold.

Of those raised Protestant, 80 percent remain so, with 52 percent still in their childhood denomination. Twenty-eight percent have moved to another Protestant following, 13 percent are now unaffiliated, 3 percent have become Catholic, and 4 percent joined other faiths.

Of those raised Catholic, 68 percent remain in the faith, 15 percent are now Protestant, 14 percent unaffiliated, and 3 percent in other faiths.

As several polls have shown, the “unaffiliated” is the fastest

growing group in the past two decades. Yet the Pew survey shows this group to be very diverse, and often serving as a way station for many still seeking a religion.

While about 40 percent in this group say they don’t believe in God, another 40 percent say religion is somewhat important in their lives, and roughly one-third say they just haven’t found the right religion yet.

“We do not see a kind of principled, fundamental rejection of a religious worldview,” says Greg Smith, a Pew researcher.

At the same time, 55 percent say they became unaffiliated because they found religious people hypocritical and judgmental. Many view religion as too focused on rules and not enough on spirituality.

For Candace Talmadge, a writer from Texas who grew up in a mixed-faith family, an unhappy experience in Sunday school set her on a path away from regular church attendance.

“When a little girl has a Jewish grandparent and the teacher says Jews are going to hell, it’s not conducive to a sense of belonging,” Ms. Talmadge explains. She stopped going to church as soon as she could and eventually found her own spiritual path.

“I do believe in God, and our spirituality is inherent in who we are,” she says. “Religion is man-made dogma.... Spirituality is God-made. Spiritual practice for me is very individualized.”

The survey also finds that some seven percent of Americans were raised without a religious affiliation, but most of them have become religious: Forty percent are Protestant, six percent Catholic, and nine percent in another faith. Among the reasons they give for joining are the enjoyment of worship services and their sense of being spiritually unfulfilled while unaffiliated. Half said they felt called by God to join a religious community.

In the shifting religious landscape, Catholicism has lost the most members: Ten percent of Americans are former Catholics, and those who have left the church outnumber those who have joined by four to one, the survey finds. (Immigration has enabled the

church to maintain its 24 percent share of the US population.)

When asked to explain in their own words the main reason for leaving the Catholic Church, about half cite a disagreement with the church’s religious or moral beliefs. For those now unaffiliated, about half were unhappy about birth control, 56 percent about teachings on abortion and homosexuality, and 40 percent about the treatment of women.

Mandy Burrell Booth, who works for a nonprofit group in Chicago, grew up in Catholic schools but began questioning what she was taught during college.

“I definitely believe in God, but I’m still sorting out who Jesus was,” she says. Along with church teaching on birth control methods, “the politics and direction of the church didn’t feel like I fit,” she says.

After trying different churches, she and her husband are now part of a Unitarian Universalist congregation called Micah’s Porch, which allows for asking lots of questions. “It’s very creative, multimedia, and humorous, and much more about the here and now than many Christian services,” she says.

Protestantism appears on the verge of losing its majority status in the United States (now at 51 percent), partly because of immigration but also because of the 13 percent who have joined

the unaffiliated. Fifteen percent of Americans, however, have shifted from one Protestant denomination to another.

“There’s a lot of vitality there, with people moving around and finding more congenial places,” says John Green, a senior fellow at Pew Forum.

Most who have changed Protestant denominations say that they found one they liked more or that their spiritual needs weren’t being met in their childhood church. About 40 percent were not satisfied with the atmosphere at worship services.

Neil Gussman became a Christian while in the US Air Force and has changed churches several times. At first he attended an independent church, but he became dissatisfied with the free form of prayers. “They were often both ungrammatical and tended to bad theology,” he writes in an e-

mail from Kuwait, on his way to deployment in Iraq.

Now his family attends a Presbyterian church, which is confessional and recites the creeds as part of services. “I know the prayers have been prayed by other believers for hundreds of years, that I am part of the whole Church,” he adds.

For all those switching allegiances, whether Catholic, Protestant, or unaffiliated, the reason most often given for joining a new church is the appeal of the worship services.

“Faith in Flux” involved interviews with 2,800 adults who were also part of the 2007 Pew survey. Sample limitations prevented the inclusion of smaller groups (such as converts to Catholicism).

Jane Lampman is a staff writer with The Christian Science Monitor.





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Reflections

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

'He heals all your diseases'

I have been chronically ill with auto-immune problems for much of my life. I am not alone in this, of course. Auto-immune conditions are affecting people in plague proportions in our time, especially in the West.

Dealing with the effects of such conditions is a challenge, as they can cause pain or debilitating fatigue and prevent their sufferers from carrying on a normal life and workload. But there's also a different challenge for Christians.

The Bible clearly teaches that God is in control of all things, events, and each of our lives. God the Deist's Clockmaker, who wound things up and is now letting them run out without concern or intervention, is a god foreign to Scripture. The God we have learned to know and love from his Word, the God who sustains and redeems us, is (as Reformed people like to put it) moment-by-moment upholding his creation.

God is there

So the first thing a Christian and his or her family must acknowledge is that God is very much *in* the picture in that illness, and that it and all the havoc it wreaks is in some way serving his purposes.

How that is so is not something that an outsider can, or should, normally pronounce; and indeed the ill persons themselves often cannot see what that purpose might be until months, or often years, have passed.

Remember the New Testament man blind from birth who was assumed to have been blind because of a sin either he or his parents

committed (John 9). Jesus sets the disciples and onlookers straight. The man was not blind because of a specific sin. He was blind so that "the works of God might be displayed in him"! As Max Lucado writes (*His Name is Jesus*, Thomas Nelson, 2009), "Talk about a thankless role. Selected to suffer. Some sing to God's glory. Others teach to God's glory. Who wants to be blind for God's glory? Which is tougher – the condition or discovering it was God's idea?"

The man spent 25 or 30 or 40 years being blind so that Jesus could come along and display the works and power of God in him by healing him. God's economy is certainly different than ours.

Ask anything in my name

Healing. The Bible promises us repeatedly – some spoken by Jesus himself – that God "heals all our diseases," that "with his stripes we are healed," that if we ask *anything* in Jesus's name he will grant it. We cling to such promises. But when, year after year, we *aren't* healed, we begin to rationalize that we shouldn't be so literal about what those (and similar) verses mean – even though their intent seems clear.

God is God, and he answers our prayers as he, Sovereign Lord of the Universe, knows we need. Even so, a lot of us (I included) like absolutes. If we pray for physical healing we want physical healing. We're not keen on "allowing" God to heal and impart strength in his way and his time for his reasons, especially if that healing is "only" spiritual or mental and doesn't allow

us to take up our bed and walk.

We don't like to hear, either, that God "disciplines those he loves" – though what kind of Father would he be if he didn't? Would we want God to simply leave us alone in our selfishness, bad habits, arrogance, addictions, pride or whatever besetting sin may mar us?

I and all who have been chronically ill have long fought that fight with God. If that has taught me one thing above all it is perseverance in prayer. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. Peter tells us that perseverance is a quality that we should "make every effort to add to our faith," (2 Peter 1), and it develops in this manner: first adding "goodness" to faith, "and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance [my emphasis], and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love" (v. 5-7).

Perseverance, then, is necessary for godliness, kindness and love to develop. My chronic illness has been a very effective means by which he the Vine-dresser has pruned me, one of his vines. It's part of his tender care for me, and was obviously needed – because he did it, after all.

But pruning can be painful; some plants have branches that need drastic cutting back before they can bear much and good fruit. As a result, by God's grace, I think I can say I'm a different and more Christ-attuned person than I was before my years of illness caused me to suffer. That is a mercy.

Joyful about-face

But God has now been merciful in another way. In January, while at a very low point and doing yet another Internet search for information on alternative treatment of Crohn's disease, I was led to information about a diet and a drug that have changed my life – and the lives of thousands. I know, because I've "met" many of them in online communities.

There is hope for auto-immune diseases, and even for MS and ALS. If you or someone you love is suffering in that way, please look at the details and Internet links posted on my Reformed Revelry blog at www.reformedrevelry.wordpress.com

Praise the Lord, O my soul. And forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.... As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lords has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:2-5, 13-14)

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@roadrunner.com or via her website: www.wordpoverpublishing.com



Calvin College quick-takes

Jo Kuyvenhoven, associate professor of education at Calvin, received a \$50,000 planning grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Higher Education for Development (HED) to support her work in Sierra Leone. The grant will fund a collaborative planning initiative with Milton Margai College: to develop a tertiary-level teaching of reading syllabus to be implemented in primary schools in that country.

"It is completely thrilling to get this grant. I am deeply glad, less for me than for my educator friends and the school children in Sierra Leone," said Kuyvenhoven.

USAID and HED chose 20 paired winners of the Africa-U.S. Higher Education Initiative Planning Grant Competition. Nearly 300 applications were submitted. These paired institutions will use the grants to develop plans to address regional and national economic development priorities.

"Two years ago I started a pilot study with the help of teachers at a newly established Christian school in Kabala. When I tested the children after one year of school, the results indicated a difference of 600-900 percent between these children and those whose

teachers didn't learn about reading and new methods," said Kuyvenhoven.

Dr. Tully Cornick, executive director of HED, which manages the competition, said, "We were elated by the astounding number of highly qualified applications received and even more pleased by how many applications demonstrated a strong understanding of higher education needs in Africa ... The top 20 winners represent the best of these applications"

See related article on page 3

The Van Lunen Center for Executive Management in Christian Schools at Calvin College has announced its 2009-2010 fellows. The list includes educators from Korea to California and numerous other locales.

The Fellows program is designed for Christian school heads from the United States or Canada with fewer than 10 years experience in their position.

The Van Lunen Center was established at Calvin in January 2007 courtesy of a \$2 million gift to the college from the Richard D. Van Lunen Foundation. Its purpose is to

provide world-class executive management education for senior leaders of schools based on the historic Christian faith (of which there are some 20,000 across the continent).

The Fellows program is a key part of that vision for Christian education. It is a selective one-year fellowship that, said Van Lunen Center director Shirley Roels, assists heads of Christian schools in refining the executive skills necessary for school management in the current competitive climate.

"Through case studies, reading, writing, interactive exercises, small group discussions, a school based project, and coaching," she said, "participants will deepen their own leadership, develop skills essential to the tasks of headship, and create deep relationships with peers and leaders."

A Calvin senior and two Calvin professors have earned prestigious Fulbright Awards for 2009-2010. Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the awards are scholarships established to foster international research and collaboration.

Janel Curry, a geographer and Calvin's dean for research and scholarship, will

spend the spring 2010 semester in Hong Kong, working with American professors to transition Hong Kong universities from three-year to four-year undergraduate-offering institutions. This is the second time Curry has earned a Fulbright.

David Hoekema, a Calvin College professor of philosophy, will spend a semester teaching and researching African political philosophies in Kenya. This is Hoekema's first Fulbright but his fifth stay in Africa. Hoekema's first visit was in 2001 to Nairobi where he assisted in faculty development and publication efforts at the request of Daystar University faculty.

"The five months that I will spend in Kenya with Fulbright support will enable me to lend assistance to Daystar University, a key partner of Calvin's, in the task of preparing Christian leaders for a global church," said Hoekema.

In addition to Curry and Hoekema, Calvin College senior Eric Bratt has also earned a Fulbright Award. Bratt, a triple honors student graduating in May, received his Fulbright to study and do research in a Chinese village in Manchuria where the last speakers of the Manchu language live.

Continued on p. 19

Opinion

The heaven heresy

Bert Hielema

Life is interesting for me, even though Bell Tel sometimes makes matters miserable. I am in this technologically advanced country on dial-up Internet service. Can't get wireless, and too many trees make it impossible to sight a relay tower. So I am stuck with grandma Bell. The connection between our house and the highway goes dead when snow melts or rain falls, while the line to the village – 5 km away – suffers from nobody knows what – perhaps squirrels or black flies or raccoons eating the wires. All of this gives me p.p. Internet service. The p.p. you can either read as pretty poor or as a shorter version where the first “p” is exactly that, and also a four-letter word conveying the same meaning.

But life is good, and even afterlife gets good publicity nowadays.

Afterlife? Yes, life after death is very much in the news nowadays. Perhaps not surprisingly, the typical American believes not in evolution or global warming but in Doomsday and an afterlife, in heaven, of course. We will be wearing white robes and clutching golden harps, I presume. The average American adult sees the earth as 10,000-year old evil matter whose substance may be abused (hence the denial of global warming) because Doomsday is coming and the heaven-bound afterlife is a certainty. They expect Doomsday to come knocking at the door anytime now, abetted by

the combined crush of economic collapse, peak oil and global warming, the latter not human-induced, of course, but an act of God. This trinity of evil will, they believe, be so severe that society as we know it will never recover, our lifestyles will be seriously compromised and survival will become a life-or-death issue.

I can back this up with statistics. The surveys vary a bit, but for the longest time something in the order of 90 per cent of Americans, say they believe in God and an afterlife in heaven.

It's now been 200 years since Charles Darwin came up with his evolution theory. I think that he was partly right. Of course I believe that God exists – as did Darwin – and created the cosmos. I also believe that this took place millions if not billions of years – after all, with God one day is as a thousand or million years and a billion years as one day. Since the time of creation, humans and animals have gone through development stages (don't we all?). Yet two-thirds of all Americans believe that the earth was created 10,000 years ago.

The church-going crowd in the USA is mostly Republican. Among them only 21 per cent think that we are at fault causing climate change. That too fits with their heaven-bound preoccupation. To them “earth is a foreign strand, a wilderness waste, quoting a hymn. In other words, most Americans don't think their use of fossil fuels causes this Greenhouse Effect.

They blame nature.

Fortunately there are still a lot of religious people who think otherwise. On February 21 the *Globe and Mail* had an interesting exchange between Ian Brown and Jean Vanier. I love Jean Vanier, and I have many of his books.

In that article both mention life after death. Neither mentioned “heaven,” which, seen as a human destination, is a very unbiblical concept. Let me give one example: The last verse in the book of Daniel says, “As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.” Jesus, too, sees death as “a restful sleep. That inheritance, by the way, is a cleaned-up earth.

The church is wrong when it portrays heaven as the after-life abode, a lie the Devil has successfully sold to organized religion, weakening the resolve of church people to whole-heartedly care for the earth.

Vanier writes that, in thinking of life-after-death, he visualizes “it will be a wonderful moment of peace, of joy, of ecstasy of love, a fulfillment of love. It will be more wonderful than anything we could have imagined.” He repeatedly mentions the beauty of the earth, which reminds me that “God made no junk and will not junk what he has made.” That's why we must now live so that when the

renewal comes we will have no trouble making that transition.

So how will it all end? I don't talk about Doomsday – the Bible calls it The Day of the Lord” – except to refer to the current economic and environmental crisis. If the majority of Americans deny any direct responsibility for climate change, then our planet will certainly keep on deteriorating at a rapid rate. And China and India,

taking their cue from America, will continue to pollute.

Indeed, the collective American psyche definitely has a Doomsday mentality, enhanced by their heaven heresy.

Oh, yes, we live in interesting times.

This column can be seen at <http://hielem.ca/blog/>, and is regularly viewed in more than 25 countries, among them, Russia and China.



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Calvin College quick-takes ... continued from p.18

The Fine Arts Center, an historic venue at Calvin College, hosted its final concert on Saturday, May 9 at 7:30 p.m. The venue has hosted around 18,000 events since it opened in 1966.

More than 200 performers from the music department presented “A Concert of Covenant,” a gala evening celebrating God's faithfulness through the 43-year history of the Fine Arts Center.

“It's safe to say that there are very few dark nights in that auditorium,” said Jeff Schra, coordinator of Calvin's student music tours.

The FAC will undergo a significant remodeling

beginning this Spring. The remodeling is a part of the campaign for Calvin College and will create additional practice, rehearsal, teaching and performance space. There will also be upgrades to seating, lighting and acoustics as well as new wall and floor finishes.



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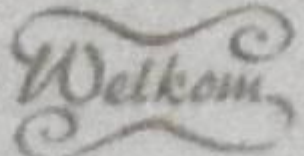
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Birthday	Anniversaries	Obituaries
<p>OPEN HOUSE Saturday June 6, 2009 2 – 4 p.m.</p> <p>Celebrating the 90th Birthday of Jantje Vanderveen</p> <p>At Horizon Hall – King Tower Holland Christian Homes 45 Kingnoll Drive, Brampton</p> <p>With love from your children Walter Vanderveen Ida & Bill Prins Corry & Bill Kuyvenhoven Gerrie Morley Rose & Brian Hodgson Ed Vanderveen 16 grandchildren & 10 great-grandchildren</p> <p>Mailing address: Trinity Tower 406 - 7900 McLaughling Rd Brampton ON L6Y 5A7 'Great is God's Faithfulness'</p>	<div> <div> <p>June 10, 1959 Strathroy, Ontario</p> <p>With praise and thanks to God for his love and grace, we, the children and grandchildren of</p> <p>ALBERT AND MARTHA TAMMING (nee Linker) announce with gratitude their 50th Wedding Anniversary</p> <p>We thank God for their love for each other, and for the love they give to us.</p> <p><i>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.</i> Colossians 3:17</p> <p>Congratulations!</p> <p>Bonnie & Chris John & Wendy Joanne & Bruce Gary & Rose David & Arlene and grandchildren</p> <p>Home address: Unit 2 - 825 Shelborne St. London ON N5Z 5B7</p> </div> <div> <p>June 10, 2009 London, Ontario</p> <p>Bloomfield 1959 <i>Light is sown for the righteous. and gladness for the upright in heart.</i> Psalm 97:11</p> <p>With joy and thanksgiving to God for the many blessings we have received, we announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents.</p> <p>HENRY AND ANNIE NYMAN on June 6, 2009</p> <p>May you continue to receive God's blessings of health and happiness.</p> <p>With all our love from your children, Rick & Grace Nyman of Picton Joan & Dave Crawford of Hillier Lynette & Larry Pennings of Carrying Place With much love also from all the grandchildren.</p> <p>To celebrate this happy occasion you are invited to our Open House on Friday June 5th, 7-9 p.m. 2009 at the Bethany Christian Reformed Church of Bloomfield 158 Main Street, Bloomfield, Ontario.</p> <p>Home address: Henry & Annie Nyman PO Box 191-191 Main Street, Bloomfield ON K0K 1G0 <i>Best wishes only please.</i></p> </div> </div>	<p>After a 26 year courageous battle with MS, God called home his precious child,</p> <p>HARRIET FRANKRUYTER (nee Sneltsjes) in her 49th year.</p> <p>Beloved wife of Robert Frankruyter and loving mother of Alaina. Precious daughter of Henk & Lieneke Sneltsjes. Loved sister of Jennifer, Marion, Ron & spouses Aunt of 7 nieces and nephews.</p> <p>Correspondence: Henry & Lena Sneltsjes Box 133, Consecon ON K0K 1T0</p>
<p>Anniversary</p> <p>JANET AND ANTHONY MOHLE are blessed to enjoy their 50th Wedding Anniversary this year. In celebration of this anniversary an Open House will be held 13 June 2009 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Christian Reformed Church in Drayton Ontario.</p> <p><i>Thanks be to God.</i></p> <p>Address for correspondence: Janet & Anthony Mohle, RR 3 Moorefield ON N0G 2K0</p>	<div>  </div> <p>May 28, 1959 With thankfulness to God we celebrate the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p> <p>ALLARD AND IMIE COLYN (nee DOUMA) We pray the Lord will continue to bless you. Love your Children and Grandchildren Randy & Wendy Colyn Jenelle & Jeremy Tarin & Levi Braden, Jesse Ken & Karen Tigchelaar Amy & Josh Katelyn, Aron, Paul Henry & Tonny Colyn Kirsti, Lindsay, Melanie Dan & Lynn Colyn Olivia, Paige</p> <p>Open House to be held Saturday June 13, 2009 from 2-5:00 p.m. Smithville Covenant Christian Grade School 6497 Regional Rd 17 <i>Best Wishes only</i></p> <p>Home address: 280 West Street Box 99 Smithville ON L0R 2A0</p>	<p>September 25, 1923 - April 20, 2009</p> <p>HENRY JANSEN passed into the presence of his Lord on April 20, 2009, aged 85.</p> <p>He will be deeply missed by his loving family:</p> <p>His wife of 50 years, Jennie Jansen</p> <p>His children & grandchildren, *Steven & Bonnie – Taya, Kassi *Judy & Jim *Tim & Heather – Stephanie, Kyle, Mairin *David</p> <p>He is also survived by brothers and sisters: Dena Dykshoorn of Lethbridge, AB, (Marie), Marie, Len (Jackie), Gert DeJong of Grimsby, ON, Tony (Henrietta), Herman (Leida) of Armstrong, BC, and many nieces and nephews.</p> <p>Henry was predeceased by his sister, Alice, and brothers, Steven, Patrick, John, and sister-in-law Denie and brothers-in-law Dick Dykshoorn and Rev. John DeJong.</p> <p>A memorial service was held on April 24, 2009 at Trinity CRC, Abbotsford, BC</p> <p>Correspondence address: 4105 Verdon Way Abbotsford BC V4X 1X3</p>
<p>Personal</p> <p>Christian lady (widow) in her 50's seeking friendship with a christian gentleman. My kids are grown and on their own.</p> <p>Reply to file # 2767 c/o Christian Courier 2 Aiken St St. Catharines ON L2N 1V8</p>	<p>HOLLANDSE DAG June 3 10:00 a.m. at First Christian Reformed Church, 310 Kingscourt Avenue Kingston Spreker: Rev. Hans Uittenbosch For info call (613) 546-5615</p>	<p><i>Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.</i> Hebrews 12:2</p> 
<p>Vacation</p> <p>Holiday accomodation in Holland with vehicle rentals and tours. www.chestnutlane.nl</p>  	<p>Join us in celebration and reflection! JOANNE PAAS is retiring from teaching.</p> <p>After teaching for 34 years in Christians schools, Joanne is ready for new challenges!</p> <p>Joanne started her career in the sixties at Wallaceburg Christian School. From there she taught in London Parental Christian School and then the last 29 years at Trinity Christian School in Burlington.</p> <p>The Trinity School Board and Alumni Committee invite you to join us on:</p> <p>Saturday, May 30 in the gym at Trinity Christian School at 2170 Itabashi Way in Burlington from 2:00 - 5:00.</p> <p>Friends and colleagues are invited to come and celebrate Joanne's outstanding career and exemplary dedication for the precious students whom she has taught!</p> <p>"Founded in Faith...together on a journey"</p> <p>Faith Christian Reformed Church of Burlington, Ontario invites friends and past members to celebrate with them 25 years of God's faithfulness.</p> <p>On Saturday, June 13, we are planning a BBQ beginning at 5:00 p.m. with an evening of fellowship at Faith CRC, 2265 Mountainside Drive, Burlington</p> <p>On Sunday, June 14, a service of celebration will be held at Compass Point Church (formerly Brant Bible Church) at 2501 Eaglesfield Drive in Burlington at 2:30p.m. <i>All are welcome.</i></p> <p>For complete details please access our website at www.faithcrc.ca or contact the church office at 905-336-5353 We also welcome your stories, memories and pictures at 25years@faithcrc.ca</p>	<p>BERNARD H. BOT November 13, 1920 – April 28, 2009</p> <p>On Tuesday, April 28 Bernard H. Bot went home to be with the Lord. Bernard was born in The Hague, November 13th, 1920. He was the youngest of 8 children. Bernard married his true love Trudy on July 3rd, 1947 and emigrated to Canada in 1954. He was predeceased by his parents and siblings, and by Trudy, his loving wife of 61 years. He was a very active member of the Christian Reformed Church, freely volunteered his time to support the Christian Schools, and supported many Christian organizations.</p> <p>Beloved father of Rudy (Rita), Liz VanEssen (Leon), Marilyn Pearn (Doug), and Julia Bot (Russ Roberts). Beloved grandfather of Elicia, Kevin, Stephen, Joel, Amanda and Kyle.</p> <p>The memorial service was held Saturday, May 2, 2009, at Redeemer Christian Reformed Church, Samia, ON with Pastor Jim Poelman leading the service.</p> <p>Correspondence may be sent to: Julia Bot, E-mail address: corgipalace@cogeco.ca</p>

Travel/For Sale/Jobs

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Christian Courier is published on the second and fourth Monday of each month. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Wednesday, 12 days prior to publication date.

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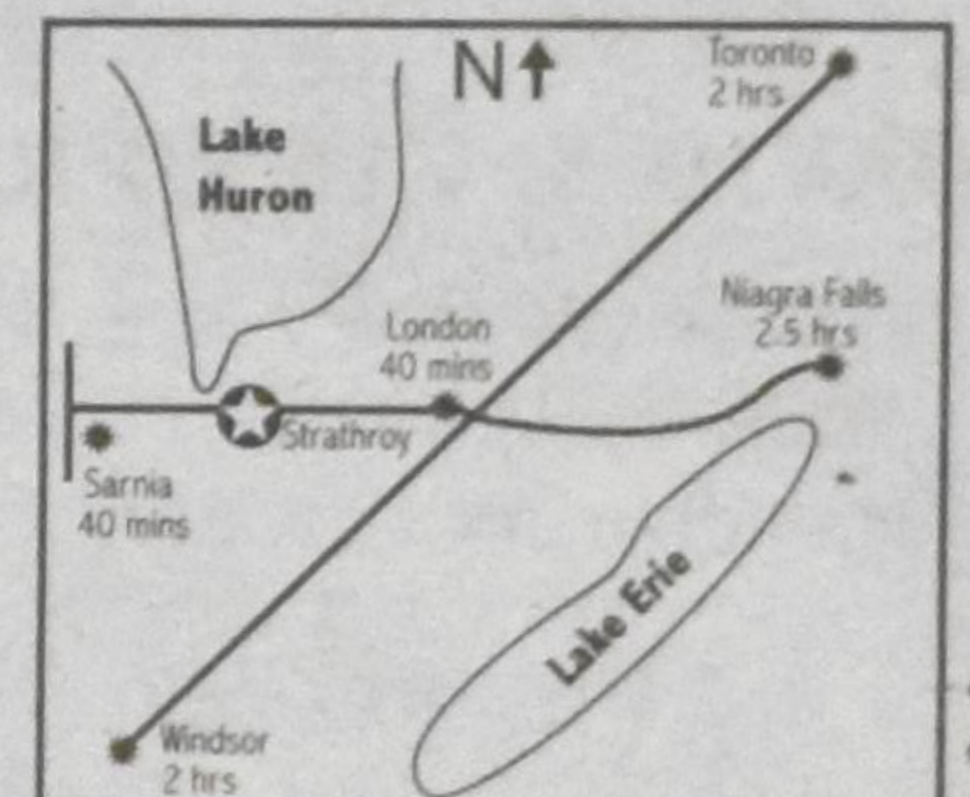
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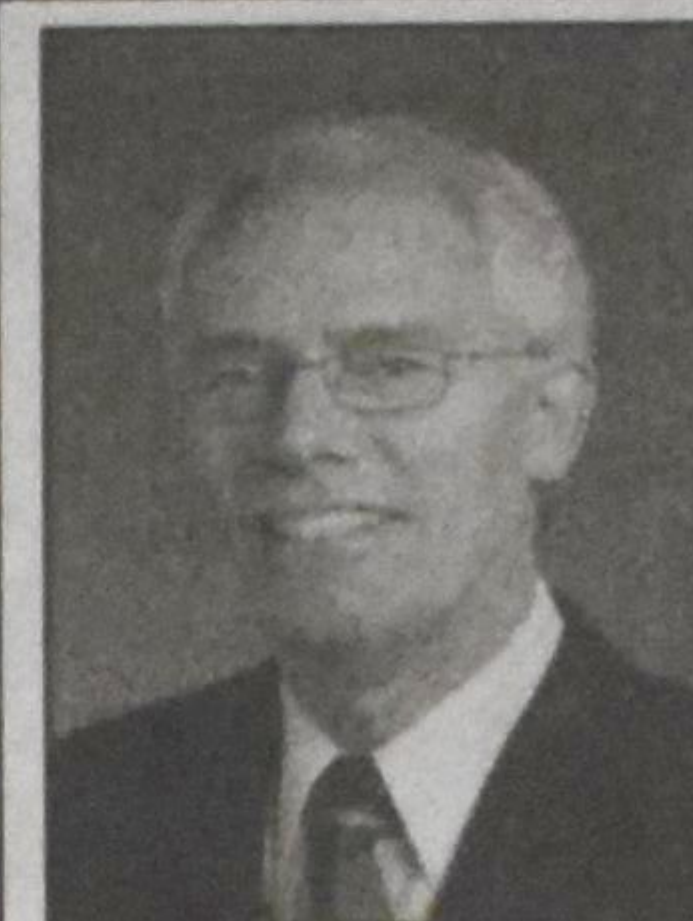
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 23 Combined nine Male Choirs (over 300 voices) from Southwestern Ontario, will present D. V. a Festival of Praise Concert, singing all Sacred mass numbers, at the Centennial Hall, 555 Wellington Street, London, Ontario. Saturday, at time 7:30 p.m. Doors open 6:30 p.m. Tickets \$13.00 from all choir members and host Choir: St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo". For tickets and information please call: (519) 637-4357 or (519) 631-9245 No reserved seating.

May 30 John Knox Christian School, **Brampton**, would like to invite former students & staff to our 50th Anniversary Celebrations. Golf Tournament 7:00 a.m., Open House 4-6 p.m. & dinner 6:30 p.m. See our website for details & registration information: www.bramptonjkcs.org or email us: [blessings@bramptonjkcs.org](mailto: blessings@bramptonjkcs.org) Please bring your JKCS memorabilia for the Open House.

May 30 The Liberation Choir presents their Spring Joy Concert. See ad this issue.

May 30, 31 First CRC **Sarnia**, Ontario will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of its organization the weekend of May 30, 31. A banquet will be held on Saturday night with special services held on Sunday. All friends and former members are certainly invited and welcome to join in this celebration. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1crc75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808

May 30, 31 Aylmer, ON CRC will be celebrating its 60th anniversary. An evening of entertainment and desserts will be held on Saturday night beginning at 7 p.m. at Immanuel Christian School. Sunday at 10 a.m. we will have a special service led by former pastor Rev. Chris Spoor. Evening service (7 p.m.) of praise and worship led by our present pastors. All friends and former members are invited and most welcome to join in this celebration. For more info, contact: annette@familyflowers.ca or call the church office at 519-773-3025

May 31 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Klomps will be preaching.

June 3 Hollandse Dag 10:00 am at First Christian Reformed Church, 310 Kingscourt Avenue, **Kingston**. Spreker: Rev. Hans Uittenbosch. For info call (613) 546-5615

June 3-5 ACROSS BORDERS an international conference featuring Dutch-Canadian and Dutch-American history and culture, to be held at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. For more details please contact Petra Zantingh pzantingh@redeemer.ca 905.648.2131

June 6 Outdoor Pizza Evening, a RE-create fundraising event filled with fun, food, art and stories.) For tickets or more information contact 905-528-0353 or visit www.re-create.ca.

June 10 Hollandse Dag in the Moorefield Community Centre. See ad.

June 13 Faith CRC, **Burlington**, 25 year anniversary. See ad.

July 1 Frisian Picnic starting at 11 am at Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area, **Paris**, Ontario. Contact fyskedei@hotmail.com

Oct 3 The next Netherlands Bazaar will be held in the Thornhill Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave. in **Thornhill**, Ontario

The Liberation Choir

presents our

Spring Joy Concert

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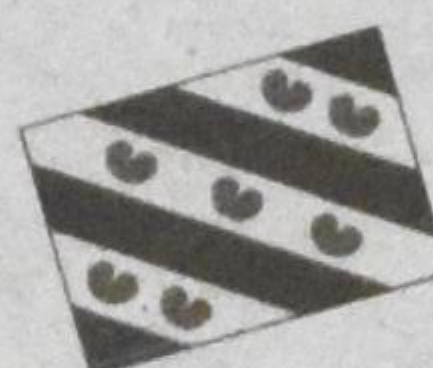
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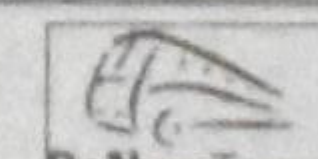
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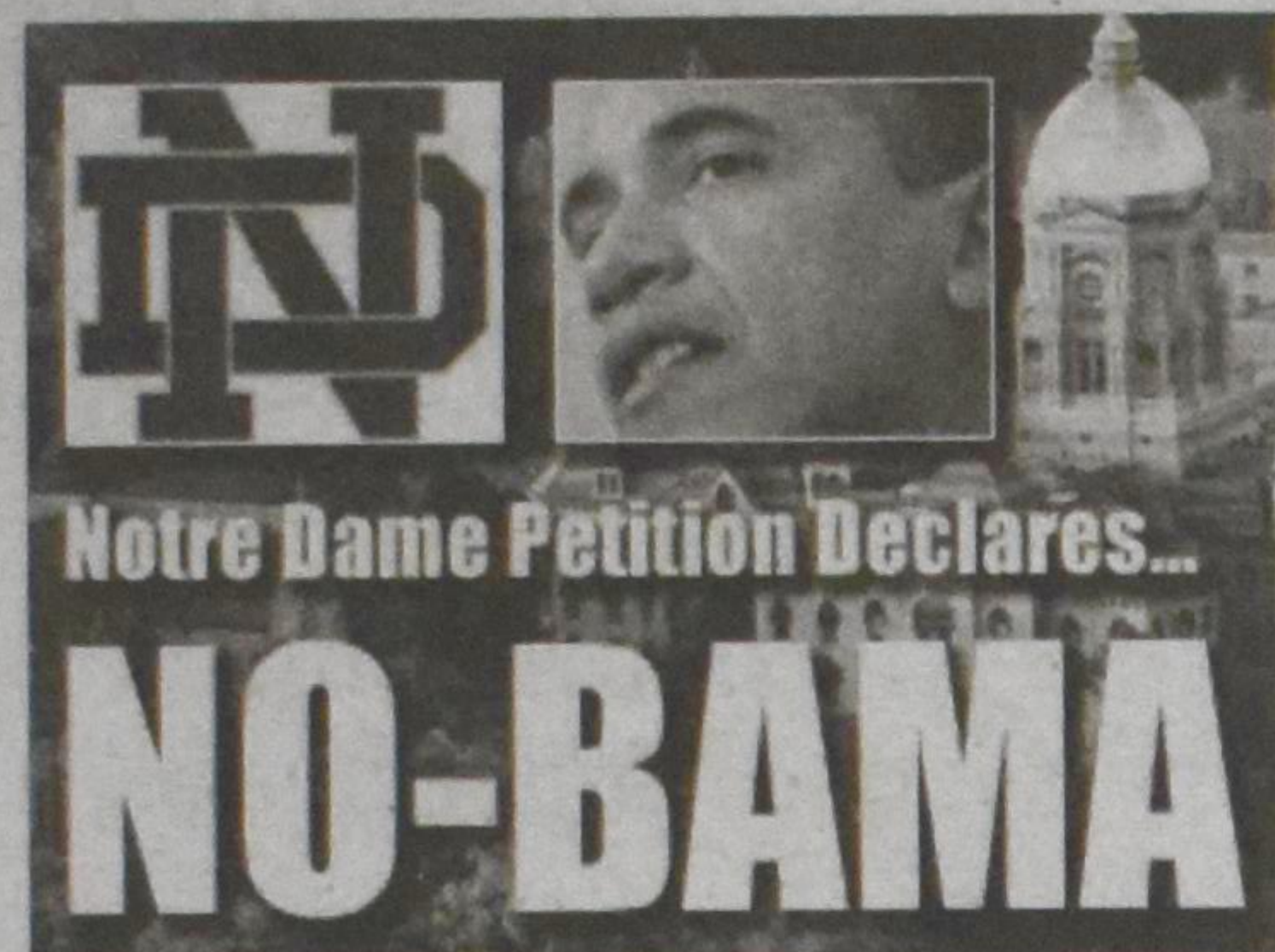
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News

Obama at Notre Dame: The responsibility of Christian schools in selecting speakers



Patrick B. Craine

In March, when the White House announced that President Obama would deliver the commencement address at the University of Notre Dame May 17th, controversy erupted – particularly when Notre Dame added that they would award Obama with an honorary law doctorate. An online petition managed to gather over 350,000 signatures in protest, and over 70 Catholic bishops spoke out against it.

The controversy stems from two facts: Notre Dame is a prestigious Catholic university, and Obama – staunchly pro-abortion so far – has been called the most anti-life president to date. The problem is that giving him a platform and honour is seen as a way of endorsing his actions, and violates the US Catholic bishops' 2004 policy entitled "Catholics in Political Life." The bishop of Notre Dame's own diocese says the university has violated this policy and chosen "prestige over truth."

Discuss, don't dismiss

University president Fr. John I. Jenkins disagrees; he says the policy

is only for Catholic politicians, and that welcoming Obama will open up dialogue: "However misguided some might consider our actions, it is in the spirit of providing a basis for dialogue that we invited President Obama."

He dismisses the claim that honouring Obama could be taken as an endorsement of the president's views on life issues, saying: "In every statement I have made about the invitation of President Obama and in every statement I will make, I express our disagreement with him on issues surrounding the protection of life.... If we repeatedly and clearly state that we do not support the President on these issues, we cannot be understood to 'suggest support.'"

Defining the mission field

Regardless of what happens on May 17, the controversy raises an interesting question: what is the responsibility of Christian schools in the selection of guest speakers? Fr. Jenkins's comments have some appeal, because Christian witness does require developing personal relationships and listening to other perspectives. Christ himself welcomed the company of sinners and listened to them intently.

At the same time, however, Christ never ceased to speak the truth. We must distinguish between welcoming

those who profess things hostile to our Christian beliefs and honouring them. We must also be attentive to the nature and context of the speech. Many speeches given on campus do not allow for true dialogue because, more often than not, the speaker is simply given the floor.

I would argue that a speaker who professes beliefs manifestly contrary to Christian teaching ought not to be welcomed as a speaker at a Christian school. In my opinion, in honouring President Obama, Notre Dame has chosen to espouse worldly virtue over Christian virtue.

Patrick Craine resides in Halifax with his wife Jenna and newborn son Noah. He is a writer with LifeSite News.com and is pursuing an M.A. in Philosophy.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING CANADA CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Insight for Living Canada is celebrating 25 years of ministry in Canada. To commemorate this milestone year, Chuck Swindoll will be hosting three special events in Toronto!

Wednesday, June 24th

Celebration Dinner @ Doubletree Hilton Toronto Airport
Featuring Christian recording artist guest Sara Groves

Thursday, June 25th 12 pm

Swindoll Leadership Luncheon @ Doubletree Hilton Toronto Airport
Featuring Sara Groves and other musical guests

Thursday, June 25th 7:30pm.

Celebration Event @ Queensway Cathedral
Featuring Sara Groves, Brian Doerksen, and the Toronto Mass Choir

Insight for Living Canada is the Bible teaching ministry of pastor and best-selling author Chuck Swindoll. The Canadian ministry began in 1984 and has grown to air on over 90 stations across Canada.

Insight for Living is a leading program in Christian broadcasting and airs in both Christian and non-Christian radio markets throughout the world and to a growing Webcast audience.

For more information or to order tickets for the 25th Anniversary Events, call 1-800-663-7639.

Odds and Trends

What was old is new again

A British supermarket chain has a new marketing tool that decreases food transportation costs, helps the environment and promotes healthy living: a bicycle trailer to carry your groceries home. The trailers can be borrowed free of charge. You can use your own bicycle once it has been fitted with a special bracket for the trailer to clip onto. The insulated trailer can keep products chilled or frozen for up to two hours.

Waitrose even sends its young employees out with the bicycle trailers if they're too young to drive the delivery van.



Last summer, Ikea stores in Denmark started renting bicycle trailers for cycling customers to tow purchases home. It's being touted as a smart new business idea, but to anyone over fifty it sounds awfully familiar. There are already online grocery delivery services, such as Green Earth Organics in Vancouver and Toronto, which will bring fresh milk to your doorstep. "Due to nostalgia and a desire for local food from a trusted source, milk deliveries are making a comeback in the United States, though in some places in Canada, they never really went away," according to the *Toronto Star*. How long before my doctor will be ringing the doorbell with his black bag, do you think?

Hockey goatees and world peace



A few weeks ago, Joel Nagtegaal and a few roller-hockey team friends were sitting around debating who would grow the best playoff beard. It has become a Canadian tradition for hockey players to stop shaving once their team makes the playoffs. Fans have

picked up the habit too, refusing to shave in solidarity until their favourite team is eliminated or victorious.

The talk of goatees led to goats when Nagtegaal's friend, a local Christian high school teacher, mentioned a recent goat fundraiser at his school. The 10 friends and die-hard hockey fans "vowed to celebrate each Canucks playoff win by buying a goat for a family in Africa," Nagtegaal says. If the Vancouver Canucks take the Stanley cup, as they hope, the post-season total would have been 16 goats.

Since making this pact, however, more and more people – hockey fans or not – have jumped on board. At the time of writing, enough pledges have come in for 732 goats. A website, set up by a donor, called "Goat Canucks Goat: facial hair for world peace" is getting over 2,000 visitors a day from all over the world – 43 different countries so far. The official website of the Vancouver Canucks hockey team has a story about this mission, including a link to CRWRC, which is organizing the donations. Nagtegaal has been interviewed on CTV, Global and CBC, as well as featured in the *Langley Times*, the *Vancouver Sun* and, oddly, a paper in Switzerland. "This has grown," Nagtegaal says, to something beyond any of our imaginations."

Angela Reitsma Bick

Sudoku 9x9 - Medium (138339691) Solution at: www.sudoku-puzzles.net

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